

THE FINAL CURTAIN CALL

1969 - 2022

COMPILED BY
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(19.5MB PDF)

With fondness and thanks.



BARN THEATRE - FINAL CURTAIN

Inevitably, the time comes to all to make that final curtain call, so in remembrance of those who have passed through our lives, I have recorded the obituaries as reported in the Barn News since 1969 to 2022.

The obituaries have been written by various members; their names have been included when indicated in the Barn News. All those without a name attached are assumed to have been written by Barn News editors Ray Aspey and Keith Thompson, Keith has infact written by far the majority for which we thank him.

All members are included irrespective of how their importance or involvement in the Club may be judged and they are collected into Seasons rather than years, a Season being September to August.

Robert Gill
Welwyn Garden City

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SEASON 1970 – 1971

Lady Margaret Osborn

We deeply regret to record the death during July 1970 of Lady Margaret Osborn. She had been seriously ill for many months, but she endured great discomfort with patience and courageous cheerfulness.

We have lost a friend who faithfully supported drama in the town since the earliest pioneering days of the twenties, and few Barn productions did not see her as a gracious but most knowledgeable member of the audience.

The Institution of the Margaret Osborn Trophy at the Welwyn Festival in 1960 was in itself typical of her understanding and sympathy for the work of amateur societies. This award goes to the team coming third – just short of the glory of being winners or runners-up, but invariably representing a production of much merit which had given great pleasure to the audience, and in Margaret's view, deserving of tangible recognition.

Margaret Osborn has played no small part, through her devoted support, in the achievements of Sir Frederic himself. He, who has done more than any Garden Citizen to establish the strength and high repute of local drama, has suffered a grievous loss, and we tender our heartfelt sympathy.

(Roy Brewer)

Marguerite Crowther

The Barn Theatre Club has lost one of its very well-known members in the death, on November 7th, of Madame Marguerite Crowther.

Best known as a musician of outstanding gifts, particularly as a choir conductor, she was very interested in Drama and attended most of the Barn productions with great pleasure.

SEASON 1974 - 1975

Kathleen Hill

A link with the early days of the Barn was lost when Kath Hill died suddenly at her home in Cornmead, early in December. She first appeared some forty years ago in Lockhart Smith's production of "From 9 till 6", and right until the theatre closed down in 1939 she was very active both on the stage and as stage manager. In 1946 she was one of the small group which set themselves the considerable task of bringing the Barn back into theatrical use after wartime occupation by the Services.

In the forties Kath was again active. She gave a delightful performance in "Mr. Bolfray" (1947) and acted as assistant producer for the hugh production of "Lady Precious Strem" (1948). She was busy in "The Insect Play" (1949), "Cradle Song" (1950) and in the same year she gave one of her best character performances as Mrs. Cotton in Priestley's "The Linden Tree". Kath Hill was always willing to turn her considerable ability to any task which would help a show along. Wardrobe work,

'props', prompt, front of house, nothing came amiss to her enthusiasm. Her last recorded appearance on the stage was in Bernadine Bradshaw's production of "Don't Listen Ladies" (1956) but she remained always a very loyal supporter of Barn productions. Dame Flora Robson, who once was a colleague of Kath Hill at the Shredded Wheat factory, came up from Brighton to attend her old friend's funeral at Garston, and as the curtains closed at the final moments of the committal, she read most beautiful poem by John Donne as a final tribute to Kath.

Daisy Kell

We record with much sorrow her recent death after a long illness. Memories of Daisy belong particularly to early days at the Barn, when she was outstanding as a vivacious and highly intelligent actress, at home both in comedy and emotional roles.

Daisy first appeared at the Barn, as I recollect, in the 1938 production of "Murder in the Cathedral" and subsequently in a variety of parts before the Barn closed down in 1940. During the war years she gave a delightful performance as one of the quartets of young Russians in Kataovs "Squaring the Circle" put on for charity at St Francis' Hall. Her name appears frequently in 'Curtain Call' as an actress or backstage worker until the end of 1957. Of her many delightful performances I recall with special pleasure The Maid in "The Man with a Load of Mischief" (1948) and her sensitive performance of Tilly Cuff in "The Foolish Gentleman" (1952).

(Roy Brewer)

SEASON 1975 - 1976

Eric Bunce

Eric, who passed away some weeks ago, had been a strong supporting member of the Barn Theatre Club since its inception. Before amalgamation he had been a Folk Player and had acted as Secretary for that Society. Eric acted only occasionally; it is as a supporter that he will be missed.

Jim Nichol

James Nichol, who died at the end of January, was one of the small, hard-working committee who revived the Welwyn Drama Club after the war, and put the Barn back into use after its wartime vicissitudes.

He was a man of wide interests. In spite of his duties as a headmaster, his active political local interests and from 1945 to 1950 as the husband of a very active member of Parliament, he retained an active love of the theatre.

Jim acted infrequently, but his sincerity and rich Glaswegian accent brought great power to a variety of parts. Particularly I recall his Sam Gridley in 'Bees on the Boatdeck' (1938), the Third Tempter and Knight in 'Murder in the Cathedral' in the same year and as MaCcrimmon in Lockhart-Smith's production of 'Mr Belfry' in 1947.

He was vice-chairman of the Welwyn Drama Club in 1938 and again in 1946 when

the Club was revived, while in 1948 he was elected as Club's Chairman. During this year he was responsible also for a fine production of 'The Man with a Load of Mischief'

Jim's last stage appearance was as an impressive Government Minister in 'The Flashing Strem' (1950). In 1957 he was coopted to the Committee as Editor of "Drama News", but ever increasing pressure of other interests and duties compelled him to resign.

Up to his last illness Jim and Musrial were very faithful supportereres of Barn productions, rarely missing an event. Murial herself acted very effectively in a number of earlier Drama Club shows and their son Richard designed sets, built themand stage-managed very efficiently before professional duries took him away from Hertfordshire.

My own memories of Jim place him – and his family – among the stalwarts who have contributed enormously to the virility and strength of loacl drama, and to so many facets of the town's life.

(Roy Brewer)

SEASON 1976 - 1977

Gordon Whiston

This is a very sad event to record. Gordon Whiston died suddenly in March and at his funeral tributes to him came from a very wide section of the community, crowding Lemsford church to overflowing. He was well known as the active head of an important local firm and as a tireless worker for many charities. But despite his wide interests he found time in earlier years to make outstanding contributions to many Barn productions. Older residents will remember him particularly as Bluntschli (Arms and the Man) Marlow (She Stoops to Conquer) Rex (The Linden Tree) and his last full-length performance at the Barn, when he was superbly cast as Garry in Coward's Present Laughter.

Gordon brought not only expertise to his high comedy acting, but coupled with it great sincerity and sympathy. He was far from being a "big part grabber" but willingly played the tiniest parts. As a front of house manager, he was suave and imperturbable when he and Marguerite joined forces, they formed one of the most efficient and resourceful backstage teams ever seen at the Barn.

(Roy Brewer)

Leslie Smith

Many of our members will still remember Leslie Smith whose death was announced recently in the Welwyn Times. During the mid-sixties Leslie played some memorable roles on the Barn stage, notably Lockett in 'The Beggar's Opera', a gypsy in 'Maria Marten', the brides's father in 'The Italian Straw Hat' and Mr Gutman in 'Camino Real'. Of his role in 'The Italian Straw Hat' Cyril Heath wrote: "a tremendous success. His hotycultral epithets brought many laughs, and his efforts at piano playing made him look like a latent Latin Liberace". To get such a write-up from C.H. was no mean feat.

SEASON 1977 – 1978

Lilian Houghton

Older theatre-goers, particularly supporters of the Festival, were saddened to hear of the death of Lilian in September, at her home at Carnforth, Lancs.

Lilian was among the first of the long line of talented actresses who have added distinction to the local stage. Sir Frederic Osborn recalls that she played the lead in his production of 'The Silver Fox' (Galsworthy), staged in the early twenties by the Labour Players (who became Welwyn Folk Players) at the long-vanished Parkway Hall.

Mrs Houghton played a busy part also in the early days of the Festival and after helping its running in pre-war days she became Honorary Secretary of the Festival Association in 1947. She held this post until 1956 and worked with tireless efficiency to keep the Festival running smoothly. When she resigned owing to other commitments she continued to serve as a director of the Festival Association until she left the district in 1964.

Lilian was the daughter of the late John Blencowe, one of the town's earliest pioneers and a constant supporter of the Folk Players since its formation. On at least one occasion father and daughter acted together in a Folk Players Festival production.

(Ray Aspey)

David Kinghorn

I am sure that many members were as shocked as I was to read of the sudden death of David Kinghorn. David had been a member of the Barn for many years and often helped behind the bar.

I know I can speak on behalf of the Barn membership when I offer Barbara Kinghorn and her four sons our deepest sympathy.

(Ray Aspey)

Ken Lockhart Smith

It is sad to record the death on November 23rd of Ken Lockhart Smith, who was so active in the early days of the Barn.

Ken had a considerable professional background. At Oxford he had time in his law studies to be stage manager for the OUDS, and later he worked with the late James Fagan at the Court Theatre.

He was first associated with the Barn in the early thirties, when he produced and acted for the old Theatre Society (later Welwyn Drama Club). Throughout the thirties until the outbreak of war, Ken was increasingly busy as a producer, actor and administrator and for several years he was Director of the Barn for the Drama Club, who held its lease.

Ken was a tall and personable man with a fine voice and nimble tap-dancing feet. His great enthusiasms were for light comedy and Shakespeare, and many will recall with nostalgia his lovely production of 'Twelfth Night' in the Sherrards Wood Dell.

War service in the Army overseas and then increasing commitments in the world of

documentary films, left Ken little time to spare for the Barn. His last production was Bridie's 'Mr Bolfry' in 1947, but he was an honoured guest at the Drama Club's Silver Jubilee Dinner in 1960.

Although it is amny years since Ken was active at the Barn those of us who had the joy of acting with him or under his direction will long cherish his memory.

(Roy Brewer)

SEASON 1978 – 1979

Bob Saxon

Many members will be saddened to hear of the recent death of Bob Saxon. He was an active member of the old Welwyn Folk Players for whom he often acted as House Manager.

When I first joined the Folk Players twenty-five years ago, Bob was one of the first and firmest of my friends. A charming and gentle man who will be dasly missed.

(Hugh Croydon)

Sir Frederic J. Osborn

By the death of Sir Frederic Osborn, the Barn loses a good friend who has given practical support to the theatre since its inception by L.T.M. Gray in 1932.

For instance, for several years before the war, Sir Frederic instigated practical help to societies by organising a system of subsidies to any society which had competed at Welwyn Festival and had subsequently put on a week's production at the Barn.

In 1959 the Festival Association launched an appeal to help the Barn carry out much needed improvements, including the conversion of an old forage store into a clubroom. F.J.O. organised this appeal and headed the list of contributors with a substantial donation.

Throughout subsequent years F.J.O. was a regular supporter of the Barn and an enthusiastic supporter of every type of production. He was a shrewd critic and, when a play was not to his taste, he expressed his views trenchantly, but courteously. Older members will recall with pleasure the excellent criticisms he contributed for several years to the Welwyn Times. As a regular member of our audience, he will be greatly missed, but long remembered with gratitude.

(Roy Brewer)

Marjorie Bagnall

We are sorry to have to mention the death of Marjorie Bagnall. Marjorie had been a member of many years standing and did sterling work for the Club, particularly in the making and serving of coffee. This is one of the jobs that often goes unsung, but what a difference a cup of coffee sometimes makes to an evening at the Barn. We shall miss Marjorie. She was one of the dedicated bands that have done the ordinary job year in and year out. Without such service the Barn could not function at an acceptable level.

John Hart

We are sorry to report the death of John Hart, a stalwart Folk Player of pre-Barn Theatre Club days.

John first made himself very useful as a set builder; then, in 1951, he played the part of Zachariah Priestman in 'The Druid's Rest' and was launched as an actor. He took part in a number of productions and stage-managed many others, becoming, in 1955, Secretary of the Folk Players – a job he held until 1957.

John Hart was an active worker at the Barn when there wasn't much money around, nor many people to do the necessary maintenance jobs. He was generous in the amount of time he gave up for this purpose.

Unfortunately, ill health caused an early retirement and John and his wife, Nancy, went to live in the Isle of Wight. The Barn thus lost two valuable members still remembered with affection.

Michael Mills

Members will be sad to learn of the sudden death of Mike Mills, a new member. Mike played three small parts in 'The Winters Tale' and had also painted the shield which decorated the back of the stage. We extend our deepest sympathy to Lynn Mills and her four children on their cruel loss.

SEASON 1979 – 1980

Richard Brayshaw

Those of you who remember Richard will be sorry to hear that he died early in May, five days after his wife, Kay, had died. He was for some year Headmaster of Sherrardswood School.

Richard played the lead in the first play which I directed at the Barn, 'The Man who came to Dinner' in April 1954. He had previously directed 'Dark Lady of the Sonnets' at the Welwyn Festival, where in 1954 he took third place with 'The Neighbours'. He subsequently appeared in a number of Folk Players productions. Richard and Kay leave a daughter Deborah, now on the professional stage.

(Hugh Croydon)

Roy Brewer

A link with town history, and Drama in Welwyn Garden City, has been severed by the death on January 8th, 1980, at the age of 78, of Roy Brewer in the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital after an illness borne with great fortitude. I am sure that members will feel deep sympathy for Bunny in her great loss.

Roy came to the town in its early days. The Garden City was an exciting experiment for young men and women in the nineteen-twenties and many were drawn here by

the possibilities it offered. Roy became Personal Assistant to the late Sir Frederic Osborn and later Editor of the Welwyn Times.

But it was to be within the confines of Drama that Roy's most valuable contribution to the town was made. His early Waftord days saw the foundation of his love of the Theatre and he thoroughly enjoyed that exciting time when the roots of drama were being sown in Welwyn Garden City.

"Bliss it was that dawn to be alive

But to be young was very heaven".

He was a member of the old Theatre Society, a committee member of the Welwyn Drama Club from its inception in 1934 and for many years afterwards, and a member of the Committee that founded the Welwyn Drama Festival in 1929. Roy remained on the Festival committee with unbroken service from that date and never missed a festival. It seemed absolutely right that he was on the platform on the last night of the 1979 Festival having, for 50 years, served it so loyally. A treasure house of memories of past festivals and Barn Theatre reminiscences have gone with him. What a pity he never found time to put those into book form.

Roy played many of the great parts in classic plays and a host of others by modern dramatists. I think Shakespeare and Shaw were nearest to his heart, closely followed by the Restoration dramatists. He was a strong actor and took infinite pains to get the style and character right. He loved to add tiny details of clothing and make-up that he thought would help to round off a part he was playing. Nothing was too much trouble. I remember with affection his last appearance on the Barn stage as an actor. He played the Butler in my own production of "Ring Round the Moon" in 1974. Although it was a small part, he managed to steal the show. He also had a long list of successful productions to his credit, including the never-to-be-forgotten "Maria Marten", but I think the one that he looked back on with most affection to was N.C. Hunter's "Day by the Sea" in 1957.

After his severe illness four years ago when all the odds were against his survival he fought back and lived the fullest life of which he was capable. He visited his daughter Mary in America on a couple of occasions, took part in two Readings at the Barn, carried out his duties on the Festival Committee and enjoyed his visits to the theatre so dear to his heart. But it would be a mistake to think that his interests were just confined to Drama. For years he was a very active member of the Lockley's Archeological Society and assisted in the 'dig' at the Roman Bath House. He always attended the Society's meetings and went on their visits to other sites. He loved the country; parts of Suffolk, where his roots were, being particularly dear to his heart. But he was, above all, a family man, united by strong ties to the family he loved so dearly.

Now he has taken the greatest Curtain Call of all. Final though that may be, Roy Brewer will always be part of those things he helped to establish in this town: The Barn Theatre and The Welwyn Drama Festival. And those are no mean memorial.

(Ray Aspey)

Frederick Lidstone

Although Freddy Lidstone, who died recently in Malta, was not an active member of the old Welwyn Drama Club, he should be remembered here in view of the fact that he wrote two successful plays for that company. 'The first Gleam' won the Parkway Trophy in 1948 whilst 'The Spice of Life' won the festival in the following year. The late Roy Brewer directed both and the latter play gave Winifred Butler (our Fred) one of her finest roles. Freddy Lidstone was, by profession, a journalist and edited various magazines during his career.

(Ray Aspey)

Arthur Classey

It is with deep regret that we report the death of Arthur Classey who died, after a long illness, on April 22nd 1980.

Arthur was quite a character who was typecast from the start. This often hid the fact that he was a very skilful actor. His Barn debut was as Alderman Joseph Helliwell in "When We Are Married", in 1970 and he was always willing to fill a small part in plays such as "the Seagull", "The Constant Couple", "Widowers' Houses" and "The Magistrate". In the larger part of Luke in "Lady Audely's Secret" he was deliciously funny.

We shall miss Arthur and send our sincerest sympathies to Anne.

SEASON 1980 – 1981

Joan Burgess and Michael Bridges

We were all shocked during February to learn of the deaths of Joan Burgess and Michael Bridges. Joan seemed in excellent health, enjoying retirement. Michael had suffered a heart attack but was fighting his way towards health and strength which everyone hoped would eventually be his. But "there is no armour against fate". Incredible as it may seem, they have gone from us.

Joan had been active in our club for many years and had a natural gift for comedy. Her performance as Madame Arcati in 'Blithe Spirit' in 1974 will long be remembered by those who saw it. She also acted regularly for Digswell Women's Town Guild. Her performances at Welwyn Drama Festivals were always appreciated by adjudicators and singled out for special mention. We shall sorely miss her, at the Barn and around the town.

I am sure members will join me in offering Jeanne and her family our deepest sympathy. Blows of this kind are hard to bear and understand. Monkswalk School, also, must surely be much poorer for Michael's passing. But what he accomplished there will be remembered.

Sheila Bexon

It was with great sadness that we learned of Sheila's death on Friday, 7th August. Everyone who knew her will remember her with affection her warmth and vitality. Her willing help on the Social Committee and Front of House activities was very much valued. Sheila will be sorely missed by all her many friends and especially by David and their children to whom we extend our deepest sympathy.

SEASON 1981 – 1982

Tim Burden

Tim Burden, husband of Jo, died on February 15th having been ill for about eighteen months.

Tim was an enthusiast, a do-er; whatever he touched he put his heart and soul into. He did his utmost not to let his illness interfere with his enthusiasm for life. Right until the end, he and Jo supported every Barn activity. He will be missed, not least from behind the bar, where he officiated with a style of his own!

Tim was one of the first “joggers”; incredibly he ran in the “Sunday Times” Fun Run, just four months ago. He came last, he said, but he finished!

It seems unfair that so full a life should be cut short, but whatever one may feel about the injustice of his death at so early an age, his manner of facing it is an example and inspiration. He owed much to the support that Jo gave him and the love and sympathy of all of us goes out to her and her two small boys and the rest of the family.

(H.O.)

Martin Hammerton

We were saddened recently to hear of the death of Martin Hammerton. Though in recent years Martin had not appeared on the Barn stage he had in the past, as a member of the Welwyn Folk Players, played a large number of parts with great distinction. In 1951 he was in “Macbeth” and from thereon, with his fine voice, made notable contributions in such plays as “Candida”, “the Crucible”, “the Dark Lady of the Sonnets” and many others. He also appeared in “People from Nowhere”, performed in St Francis’ Church as part of World Refugee Year.

I shall miss his cheery greeting in my morning walk to town. Our paths invariably coincided at some point or other. As a matter of fact I have found it hard to accept the fact that I shall not meet him in Parkway ever again.

We all extend our deepest sympathies to Olive.

(Ray Aspey)

SEASON 1982 – 1983

Stan Stokes, Paul Mauger, Michael Guinery

Stan was an old Folk Player who won the Welwyn Medal in 1986 and had appeared on the Barn Stage only occasionally in recent years, lastly in ‘The Caucasian Chalk Circle’ in 1978. Earlier this year he had given invaluable service on the committee responsible for the Golden Jubilee celebrations, enlivening the business with recollections from his earlier days at the Barn, always accompanied by his remarkable sense of humour.

Paul was a regular supporter of the Barn in recent years, frequently attending our performances, play readings and social events.

Michael was headmaster of Applecroft School and a member of the well-known local folk singers ‘The Splinter Group’.

Our deepest sympathy to Ena Stokes, Ruth Mauger and Betty Guinery, and their families.

Stan Stokes

Looking back over twenty-eight years of working at the Barn, I am conscious most of all of friendships formed, developed and richly valued – none more so than that of Stan Stokes.

Stan was Chairman of the Folk Players when I first came to the Garden City in September 1953. He invited me to produce 'The Man Who Came to Dinner' in April 1954 and he himself played the part of Mr Stanley. He has been a real and treasured friend ever since. In March 1961 Stan played Willy Nilly the postman, in 'Under Milk Wood' and last year, I nearly persuaded him to play again the Electrician in 'The Audition' in which he delighted so many in the Embassy in 1969. In the 1968 Festival he had won the actor's medal in 'Four-way Incident'.

The trouble with making friends is that sooner or later one loses them. I am deeply aware of that loss now and offer to Ena all my sympathy and concern.

(Hugh Croydon)

Alfred Tomkins

We sadly record the recent death of Alfred Tomkins of Meadow Green.

Alfred moved to the Garden City from London after the war and was with the Folk Players for many years, latterly as their Treasurer. He will be especially remembered by older Folk Players for the exceptional quality of his speaking voice.

Our deepest sympathy goes to Lilian in her sad loss.

SEASON 1983 – 1984

Colwyn Wolsey(I)

We are sad to report the recent death of Colwyn Wolsey, former Chairman of the Barn Theatre Association and Lighting Director for the Welwyn Festival for many years.

Colwyn and Mollie retired to Norfolk in the mid-1960s but kept regularly in touch with their friends in the Welwyn area, and regularly attended the Drama Festival.

Our sympathy is extended to Mollie in her sad loss.

Colwyn Wolsey(II)

To many the obituary in the last issue will register only as a name but to older members it will bring memories of one of the early post war enthusiasts of the Barn. Around 1946 Colwyn was one of the band who built the lighting box at the rear of

the auditorium, set up its first equipment and continued over the years making improvements. He went on the light nearly every Drama Club play in those early days. There are still those practising skills he passed on to them in the lighting box. He was a member of the Festival Association, in charge of sound equipment from about 1947 and later lighting director of the festival until 1962.

From serving on the Drama Club Committee for many years he went on in the late 1950s to become chairman of The Barn Theatre Association. He was a keen advocate of 'Amalgamation' and the last committee over which he presided passed resolutions to set up the Barn Theatre Association Ltd. – first steps that would result years later in the present Club.

In 1962 he left Murphys and WGC to take up a post in Jarrow where he became training officer for Morganites Ltd. There his interests changed from amateur theatre to obedience training for dogs. Over the years he became a well-known trainer and judge at obedience shows all over the country.

Up on his retirement in 1975, Mollie and Colwyn returned to their home county of Norfolk where they soon became active members of their village of Rollesby. Colwyn served on the Church Council, set up a fund-raising movement known as the Friends of Rollesby Church and was Treasurer of the local branch of Riding for the Disabled while continuing his 'obedience' judging. Although no longer taking an active part he was a regular supporter of the Maddermarket Theatre in Norwich.

Throughout his life he helped and served others and it is typical that he expressed the wish that his body be given for medical research.

His funeral on August 22nd was, as Mollie expressed it, a thanksgiving for one who had lived a full life to the end and died a happy and busy man.

(Mollie has asked us to gratefully acknowledge the very many letters of sympathy she has received from her Welwyn friends – too many for her to acknowledge personally).

Derek Blatherwick

We sadly record the sudden death on November 19th of Derek Blatherwick, husband of Beryl, who was Club secretary from 1973 to 1977.

May I express, on behalf of all members, our sympathy to Beryl, Joy and Mark and their families.

(Keith Thompson)

Lily Tomkins

We sadly record the death of Lily Tomkins at Elizabeth House on 24th April, in the week of her 93rd birthday.

For many years a well-known personality at the Theatre, Lily was especially known for her frequent appearances serving at the coffee bar.

SEASON 1984 – 1985

Dame Flora Robson

Our patron, Dame Flora, died in July aged 82. You will all have read at least one of the obituaries in the national press, and I hope that most of you will have seen the appreciation of her interest in the Barn Theatre written for the Welwyn and Hatfield Times by our Chairman, Lesley Valler.

W.A. Darlington, whose post as Theatre Critic of the Daily Telegraph from 1920 to 1968 coincided almost entirely with Dame Flora's stage and film career, wrote at length of her triumphs in his obituary for her on July 9th. He described her as "a senior actress of singular integrity and charm" and perhaps the most telling words were these.....

"As an artist she was too deeply dedicated and too genuinely humble, as a craftsman too completely in control of her means of expression – her eyes, her voice, her hands – to be forgotten or rejected when parts came along that were within her wide range. She was in constant demand."

Tom Chown

We sadly report the death of Tom Chown at the end of August. Frances asks us to extend to all her friends who wrote to her "her very sincere thanks for their kind letters of sympathy"

Geoff Gillvray

Most of you will have seen the sad newspaper report of Geoff's sudden death during the run of the Welwyn Wailers Music Hall. Although his acquaintance with the Barn was fairly brief, it is worth recalling that he appeared in "Oh What a Lovely War" in 1968, and we remember him as a gentle man with a sense of humour.

Dora Kolker

It is with great regret that we record the death of Dora Kolker who died on the 17th April after a relatively short illness.

Dora had been at the centre of amateur drama for many years, joining the Welwyn Festival Association in 1958 and serving as Secretary from then until 1972. She continued to serve the Festival as a Committee member until last year when she was made a Vice-President.

Over the years she built up an excellent relationship with competing teams from all over the country which still stands the Festival in good stead today.

Dora, with her husband Maurice who is Licensee of the Barn, have always been staunch supporters of our theatre, attending all productions and showing a lively interest in all the Barn activities.

She will be sadly missed and we extend our deepest sympathy to Maurice and their family.

Betty McArdle

We sadly record the recent death of Betty, wife of Micahel McArdle. Though rarely able to visit the Barn, Betty was known to many of us visiting for rehearsals or meetings at their home, and our deepest sympathy goes to Micahel in his sad loss.

SEASON 1985 – 1986

Gerry Janes

I am sure we are all very sad to hear of the death of Gerry after a long illness. His performance in 'The Prisoner of Second Acenué' was his last stage appearance. His only other appearance at the Barn was in 'Rattle of a Simple Man' just before the amalgamation in 1969.

His main contribution to amateur drama was with Ware Dramatic Society and COPS with whom he acted, stage managed and directed. He made 14 appearances in Hertford Theatre Week and acted at the Minack Theatre with the Hertfordshire Players. He will be greatly missed and remembered for his great sense of humour and bravery. We send our deepest sympathy to his wife Betty, his sons Christopher and Mark and his daughter Kate.

Doris Strachan

The death of Doris Strachan at the end of October marked the end of a long and valued association with the Barn Theatre.

Doris was one of those people who are essential to any organisation such as the Barn; people who are content to stay out of the limelight and get on with routine and unpublicised jobs. Over a period of twenty years, between 1950 and 1970, she could be found in charge of the box-office or the refreshment bar – sometimes assisted by her sister Winifred – at most of the shows given by the old Welwyn Drama Club and the new Barn Theatre Club. She never appeared on the Barn stage in public.

She succeeded Denise Brewer as Treasurer of the Welwyn Drama Club in 1951 and continued until compelled by ill health to resign from Committee work in 1955. She was re-elected to the Committee in 1961 and was Chairman in 1963 and 1964, at the time when the initial moves were being made towards the amalgamation of the clubs which brought the present Barn Theatre Club into being. Failing health caused her to withdraw from the active Barn scene in 1970 but her interest in local drama continued unabated. She was made Life Member of the Welwyn Drama Club (and later of the Barn Theatre Club) in acknowledgement of her many services to the Barn.

Doris lived with Winnie in the Old Drive, Welwyn Garden City until Winnie's death, and for many years she worked at Roche Products in Broadwater Road. Her particular domestic interest was in house plants, and consequently the many friends to whom she gave seedlings and cuttings of her own cultivation are able to enjoy living mementoes of a charming lady.

(Harry J. Stull)

SEASON 1986 – 1987

Frank Coles

We sadly report the recent death of Frank, for many years a supporter of local amateur theatre before he and Marjorie moved away to Lancashire.

Our condolences, based on many happy years of friendship, go to Marjorie at this time.

Reg Milman

We sadly report the death of member Reg Milman, father of our Chairman Lesley Valler. Although he had moved away to Suffolk Reg was a regular patron of Barn Theatre productions, and our sympathy goes to his wife Betty, and to Lesley and her family.

Derrick Baldock

It was with great shock and much sadness that we heard of Derrick's tragic death during the first night of "Deathtrap".

He has been a loyal member of the Barn for many years and has attended as critic every play we have produced for the last fifteen years. Many have fond memories of him puffing his pipe on the coach to Felixstowe, Buxton, Cardiff and Inverness – he supported us at all our festivals.

However, although he was a loyal member of the Barn, he never allowed that to cloud his critical judgement of our productions. His integrity as "critic" was impeccable and much appreciated by us all.

Derrick was also invaluable as a sound archivist: many plays have benefitted from his musical knowledge. He worked as Sound man for our productions of "Ring Round the Moon", "Orpheus Descending", "Dear Antoine" and "She Stoops to Conquer".

His greatest joy was writing, which he planned to pursue after his sixtieth birthday on December 24th this year.

He was a very private man, but he will be sadly missed at all our shows, our social functions and our AGM's. He died whilst watching a show called "Deathtrap" for which he was to write a 'crit' – I am sure this would have appealed to his wry sense of humour.

I would like to thank Louis, the cast and crew and all the Front of House team, for coping so excellently with this emergency. 'The show must go on' – and it did! Very successfully.

We shall be putting a plaque above Derrick's favourite seat to commemorate his memory as both drama critic and loyal Barn member.

I know that we shall all miss his kindly face and send our sympathy and condolences to his family and closest friends.

Gladys Ayre

We sadly report the recent death of Gladys Ayre. For many years a member of the old Welwyn Drama Club (and its Treasurer) Gladys had lived in recent years in Brickwall House in Hatfield, where she died peacefully in her sleep on Friday 20th March. The funeral took place at Ludwick Methodist Church.

SEASON 1987 – 1988

Reg Wiles

We were very sorry to hear of the death of Reg Wiles. Many of our older members will remember Reg as Chairman of the Welwyn Drama Club from 1949-1952. He and his wife Alice were staunch backstage workers. Reg was an electrician; he arranged music, built and designed sets, worked as Stage Manager and ran the lighting board. The only record we have of Reg "treading the boards" was in 1949 when he played one of the three Eddies in "The Spice of Life" – this play was a festival entry and was the first-time winner for the Welwyn Drama Club. Many members have many fond memories of Reg and we wish to convey our condolences to Alice and all the other members of Reg's family.

Kate Farlie

Many of you will have already heard the news of the tragic death of Kate Farlie on January 19th, and the Club was widely represented at the funeral on the 27th, at St Francis Church.

A former pupil of Stanborough School, Kate was a skilled musician, and had been a member of several music groups and orchestras, including productions for the Welwyn Thelians, and the Herts Youth Wind Band. At the Barn her appearances included 'I Remember Mama', 'Dark of the Moon' and 'Joseph and his Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat'. Since she had moved to Horndean she had been only an occasional visitor to the Barn but she will be remembered by all of us for her cheerful and dedicated contribution to the many organisations in which she was involved, and to which she gave so much.

Our deepest sympathy goes to Eric and Pam and the whole family in their sad loss.

Maurice Kolker

As reported briefly in our last issue, Maurice Kolker died peacefully on New Year's Eve, after a day spent happily in the company of his family.

Maurice was the Licensee of the Barn for many years, having retired from the post only a few months ago. He had come to the Garden City from his native Manchester to take up a post with Catomance. Both his late wife Dora and Maurice himself became significant figures in local organisations; Dora as secretary to the Welwyn Drama Festival, and apart from his onerous duties at the Barn Maurice had time to spare for St. Bonaventure's Youth Club and local charities.

His cherry personality and his dedication will be missed.

Audrey Jennings

Audrey died in Harefield Hospital on 21st January.

She was an active member particularly in Front of House and social activities, which she would often organise during the evenings when she brought Harold and his guide-dog Harvey to the Barn.

Our deepest sympathy goes to Harold, and I know he appreciates greatly the practical assistance he is receiving from his friends at the Barn at this difficult time.

Dick Litster

Dick Litster, who lived in Valley Green since 1928 died on March 20th, aged 88. He was associated with the Barn for many years, and had written one-act plays for local theatrical groups. We extend our sympathy to Doris and the rest of the family.

Doreen Haywood and Vivian Thomas

Sadly, we record the deaths of two well-known Club members.

Doreen Haywood, who had a sudden stroke, was a busy member who made a significant contribution to Front-of-House activities and had been involved backstage in several productions. She had worked for many years at ICI.

Vivian Thomas made only one stage appearance, in 'Wizard of Oz', but was a regular supporter of many productions. Earlier in his career he had been in the Diplomatic Service, and then a teacher at Monks Walk School. Vivian died after a brave fight against cancer.

The sympathy and support of all their friends at the Barn is offered to Keith Haywood and Betty Thomas, and their families, at this time.

Mary Vick

It is with deep regret that we have heard of the death of Mary Vick who died unexpectedly on July 13th.

SEASON 1988 - 1989

Mervyn Lloyd (I)

One of the writers's treasured possessions is a facsimile edition of John Gay's 'Beggars' Opera', bought in 1964 as a memento of the production of that work at the Barn Theatre, directed by Mervyn Lloyd.

Mervyn moved to the Garden City with his parents in the early 50s. He went into the professional world of film making with an advertising agency, having trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama. His first engagement with local theatre was as an actor with Welwyn Drama Club in 1953. From that time until a week ago, his

record of involvement was almost continuous.

In recent years, Mervyn worked with the Welwyn Thanlians and with Herts. Operatic and Dramatic Society in Hertford, mainly as a director. However, one of Mervyn's most memorable acting performances links Welwyn and Hertford in his reading of 'The Narrator' in 'Under Milk Wood' – at Welwyn in 1961 and Hertford in 1987.

For many it will be as a director that Mervyn is remembered: with warmth – delight perhaps – even with a thrill of recollection by some – but with exasperation by a few. His actors, for the most part, loved him – despite his occasional lapses in punctuality at rehearsals.

His technicians sometimes despaired at what they were asked to achieve – under pressure of time heated exchanges were not unknown. His fondness for particular effects gave rise to such remarks as "Well, here's Mervyn – where's the smoke machine?"

In time to come there will be many hours of discussion of Mervyn's strengths and weaknesses as director, of reminiscences and anecdotes about 'Mervyn productions', evaluations of his skills as a translator of fictional works to the stage ('Sweeney Todd', 'Alice' for the Minack, 'Turn of the Screw' at the Barn).

His friends will have their personal memories of Mervyn. My own include these: as a young man with Bobby Young and (I Think) David Dimmock in cabaret and review sketches: his Noel Coward impressions at after-show parties: his help of younger people in finding toe-holds for them in the professional world he inhabited. Mervyn was also a kind and generous host, with a wonderful repertoire of 'green room' tales and theatrical anecdotes.

Mervyn gave all his attention to any enterprise he had undertaken, subject only to the vicissitudes of his profession. The depth of his knowledge on the theatre was immense, his preparation for each project exhaustive. He could be contentious and vexing, and yet he could charm the birds from the trees. In the outcome, he could be generous in his praise. He was also genuinely, truly modest.

To return to the 'Beggars' Opera' – which was the first joint production of the Welwyn Drama Club and Welwyn Folk Players. It was the first practical step toward the amalgamation of the clubs five years later – a cause Mervyn actively campaigned for.

In the introduction to the play – a brief dialogue between a 'Beggar' and a "Player" – the Player speaks these lines:

"As we live by the MUSE, 'tis but gratitude in us to encourage poetical merit wherever we find it. The MUSES, contrary to all other ladies, pay no distinction to dress, and never partially mistake the pertness of embroidery for wit, nor the modesty of want for dullness. Be the author who will, we push his play as far as it will go."

The list of signatures collected on the flyleaf after the production ends with these words in Mervyn's own handwriting:

*"last but not least!
Mervyn
with thanks."*

Thank you, Mervyn.

(Eric Farlie)

Mervyn Lloyd (II)

May I say how sad and shocked Janet and I were to learn of Mervyn's death. For many years both of us were closely connected with much of what he achieved at the Barn Theatre and Welwyn Festival. 'Point of Departure' in 1955 seemed to set a new standard productionwise in so much that it tackled difficult technical problems with great success, and achieved a wonderful blend of realism and fantasy without blunting either.

His productions developed an ambivalence between the naked emotions of Tennessee Williams and Albee, and the brittle sophistication of Noel Coward. May I say that I thought him more successful in the former than the latter for reasons which are irrelevant in this brief tribute. Of course, 'Red Peppers' was the exception but that was Coward on a delicious spree and a gift both to producer and performers.

I collaborated with Mervyn as Music Director, for twenty years or so. 'Red Peppers' in 1959 began it all but our first full-length one was a joint Folk Player – Drama Club production of 'The Beggar's Opera' in 1964. Somewhat coincidentally our collaboration concluded with 'The Threepenny Opera'. It seemed as though the wheel had come full circle. I found him not only a stimulating director to work with but also one who was appreciative and understanding. I do not think we ever had a cross word in our long association. His very demanding profession made it difficult for him to keep regular hours but the end result, in my experience, was always the midnight oil expended. If I had to say which production was the most successful, I should have to nominate 'Oh What a Lovely War' which moved the large audiences it attracted considerably.

One regrets the productions that never were; 'Valmouth' for instance, for which he was unable to obtain permission. 'Hamlet', of course, he always wanted to do for many years. An incredible amount of work went into a one-night stand, 'Salome' and it was worth it.

On moving here seven years ago we heard only echoes of the activities in Handside Lane so we are not in a position to comment on Mervyn's later work. Over the period we knew and worked with him, he made outstanding contributions to local and Festival drama. We do hope he will have some abiding commemoration in its future activities.

(Ray Aspey)

Mervyn Lloyd (III)

In November 1974 I wrote a 'piece' for the Barn News. I had just finished playing in the production of 'Orpheus Descending'. Mervyn Lloyd was the Director. I remember we talked when the week's run was through, and he said that coming to the end of 'was like losing a limb'. I wrote as much to the readers of Barn News. I wanted them to know of my appreciation and gratitude.

Now I feel I have lost another limb. The news of Mervyn's death left me stunned. I have lived in Devon for five years now and have not seen him in all that time yet the measure of his influence in any theatrical undertaking I may have since pursued is still apparent, for he re-established in me my own theatrical worth.

Working with Mervyn was a joy because he was a complete professional. His devotion to the theatre was total – his imagination vibrant and his attention to detail exciting. You felt you were surfing along with him on a very high tide of endeavour always aiming to catch those six-foot waves. His successes were thrilling – his failures few, but always big and challenging and courageous. He offered you his whole and undivided attention and in return you gave him back your utmost and typically he would turn it into the very best.

There has been only one Mervyn Lloyd, but across the country deep in the realms of amateur theatre there must surely be others like him. In the context of amateur and indeed professional drama they are rare creatures, to be nurtured and cherished. They are like gold in the bottom of a prospector's pan.

Talented, warm, stubborn, temperamental, single-minded, brilliantly communicative and generous, he moved through my life – and my life was made the richer for knowing him.

(Janet Shuck)

Lilian Hinton

It is with sadness we read of the recent death of Lilian Hinton, aged 93 years, the wife of the late Cyril Hinton who died in 1962.

They were both pioneers of the Drama in the early days of the Garden City; Cyril was a quiet precise producer and Lilian was a vigorous and demanding actress and producer of many successful plays given at the Barn and St Francis Hall. Lilian and Cyril and others started the Labour Players, later to become the Folk Players, who later amalgamated with the Drama Club to become the Barn Theatre Club.

Ernest Selley (of great renown) and Lilian were part of the team which took 'Mr Sampson' a one act play to the American Drama Festival and came back with the famous Belasco Cup. This was before the birth of our present Drama Festival and all its silver-ware.

Unfortunately there is a paucity of records of this period; I have one photo of Lilian – on the stage at the old cinema in 'Papa prefers the Captive Balloon' a winning extravaganza written and produced by the late Frank Herbert for a cast of about 30 (including two penny-farthing cyclists).

I should be glad to know of another records of Cyril or Lilian which could be incorporated in Harry Stull's archives of the Barn, to perpetuate their memories.

(Fred Butler)

'Mott' Salmon

We sadly record the sudden death of 'Mott' Salmon, a member and regular supporter of Barn activities. Always an enthusiast, Mott had a deep appreciation of talent and entertainment and was never slow in complimenting the performances he enjoyed.

A professional swimming coach, his principal hobbies were athletics and ballroom dancing, but fortunately these did not prevent his very frequent appearance in our audience. We shall miss him, and the condolences of all his friends at the Barn are offered to Joan, their daughter Linda and the family.

SEASON 1989 - 1990

Lesley Valler (I)

Lesley's untimely death occurred shortly before the season began. Lesley, who joined in 1971, served the Club as an actress, director, ASM, administrator, fundraiser, and youth group leader. She was a member of Council from 1974 until her death, Chairman from 1983-87, and then became the Club's Licensee. The Council Minutes expressed their sorrow and the condolences passed to David, Rebecca and Kate; *Barn News* carried many glowing letters of appreciation. A photograph of Lesley has since become a permanent feature in the Foyer recording the central role, she played in the purchase of the Barn Theatre.

Lesley Valler (II)

Even more than is usual in such painful circumstances, I find it hard to believe that she has gone; she was so alive and so determined not to be beaten. For years I used to tell her that she was the 'wellest ill person' I'd ever met, and even after Christmas when things began to get really bad for her, she still would not give in. Perhaps the greatest tribute one can pay to her courage is that she remained attractive and dignified throughout, and never made anyone feel in the least bit uncomfortable about her illness if she could possibly avoid doing so.

One casts around for comfort and there is little to be found in a death so cruelly premature. I can't begin to express how I feel for her family, now having to cope with the loss of so very special a loved one. And of course, she was special also to her many many friends. The beautifully fitting funeral service at St Mary's Hertingfordbury paid many moving tributes to her, but the most eloquent testimony of all to her capacity to inspire love was surely the sheer number of grieving people who packed themselves into the little church.

On the positive side, we shall have our memories. We shall, I suppose, all remember her strength, her spirit, her concern for others and her amazing talent for putting everything she had into everything she did. And we shall, perhaps be grateful that because of the intensity with which she lived, she must have crammed more life and experience into her 42 years than most of us manage in a full span. In addition

of course, we shall each have our individual memories. I shall never forget the last time I saw her, sitting up in her hospital bed, looking frail, but otherwise perfectly Lesley, having her finger nails painted red by Kate!

Going further back to happier times, I shall remember what was for me one of the most moving experiences I have had in any theatre: watching the members of her youth group performing superlatively well in her production of 'Joseph' at the Barn. And further back still, I shall remember little Lesley on the stage of the beautiful open air Minack Theatre in the balzing sun of 1976, wearing a sky-blue dress, white frilly apron and black and white horizontally striped stockings. With her long blond hair streaming down her back and her magically girlish appearance she quite simply was 'Alice'.

She leaves an unfillable gap. Lesley.

(Sylvia Pepper)

Andrew Gilchrist

We were saddened to hear of the death of Andrew Gilchrist on 18th Septemebr 1989. Andrew died in Birmingham. He was 61. After acquiring a chemistry degree and a D. Phil at Oxford, Andrew joined I.C.I. in Cheshire in 1954 and came to Welwyn Garden City in 1959. He was a Division Science Associate from 1978 until he retired from the company in September 1984.

Barn members will chiefly remember him for the work he did backstage for many productions, as Stage Manager or in set construction or lighting. He also did sterling work on the fabric of the Barn itself and was Technical Director from 1977 to 1980.

Following his retirement from I.C.I., Andrew was offered a 'new blood' lectureship at Birminham University and his move there in 1985 sadly severed his direct connection with the Barn.

He is survived by his wife Toonkey and by a daughter and four sons.

Eileen Salmon

Eileen Salmon was a former stalwart of the ICI Dramatic Club.

Frances Brewer

Frances 'Bunny' Brewer whose family connections with the Barn are legendary. Inevitably overshadowed in the Club's history by the achievements of her late husband Roy Brewer. 'Bunny' (mother of Anne Davis and Janet Aspey) was involved backstage on a number of occasions, the first recorded as Property Mistress in the 1937 production of 'I'll Leave it to You'. Indeed, Anne Davis can remember being wheeled round to the Barn in her pram by 'Bunny' on her way to stoke the Barn's old coke boilers.

Arthur E Bartholomew

'Barty' (A. E. Bartholomew), who died on the 17th January, was interested in every aspect of Garden City life – business, civic, church and social, and was actively involved in these. But it is as a great stalwart of the Barn Theatre that we remember

him here.

In spite of being severely wounded in the 1914 – 1918 war, he lived a full and active life over more than ninety-three years, all of which, from schooldays on, he happily shared with Win.

He joined the Folk Players just after the last war and from then on he took an energetic part in the Theatre's life – on stage and off. He became treasurer of the Folk Players in 1956 and continued in this office through the changeover to the Barn Theatre Club in 1969, and until 1972.

He took his first part on the Barn stage in 1947 in the role of Giles Lacy in "Rebecca" and during the fifties and sixties acted in several plays including the parts of Matthew Skips in "The Lady's not for Burning" and Rosen, the art dealer in "The Late Christopher Bean".

He had a very strong stage presence, as exemplified by his role of Sir Lancelot Spratt in "Doctor in the House". Off stage too, Barty was forthright in manner, speech and opinion, full of confidence and fun, and it came as a great surprise to those who shared a dressing room with him, that just before he received his stage call he became as nervous as any trembling newcomer! Needless to say, the nerves disappeared the moment he made his entrance.

We remember Barty with much affection. It was always a pleasure, and often fun to be in his company.

We are thinking of you Win, and send our love.

(Ena Stokes, Arthur and Kathie Lloyd)

Anthony Price

All who knew Andy Price will be sorry to hear of his death on April 30th at the age of 84. There are still a surprising number of members who knew him and took part in his productions during the early 1950s.

He was studying medicine, when the call of the stage took him professionally to the Little Theatre, Bristol. He realised his limitations for making the stage a lifetime career, and with his previous experience in medicine he obtained the position of Secretary to the Hospital for Tropical Diseases in Gower Street which was then part of the Seaman's hospital at Greenwich. He joined the R.N.V.R. The war took him first to Harwich and then to Falmouth on the staff of Flag Officer in Charge Western approaches. He was then posted to S.E. Command on Mountbatten's staff, first in Delhi and then in Candy. On his return home he was appointed House Governor of the Seaman's hospital Group of hospitals which position he held until his retirement, being awarded the OBE for his services to the NHS.

Andy Price's first association with Welwyn Garden City amateur dramatics came through his friend Cyril Nairne of Hatfield, who produced and acted for what was then the Theatre Society in the late 1920s and early 1930s. He took part in Nairne's production of 'Milestones' one of the earliest plays to be put on at the new Welwyn Theatre in Parkway, and was a member of Nairne's 'Mid-Somerset Players' who toured Somerset for many years with open air productions (chiefly Shakespeare) for charities during their summer holidays.

Andy's productions at the Barn included 'The Flashing Stream' (Charles Morgan) 1950, Shaw's 'You Never Can Tell' 1951 (which was a Shaw memorial production

and played to full houses for all seven performances – a Barn first!) and Anouilh's 'Antigone' 1952.

His Drama Club entries for the Festival included 'The Lover' (Sierra) 1953, 'A Sunny Morning' 1965, which came second, winning the Welwyn Cup and Fred Butler winning the Welwyn medal; and finally 'Sacrifice to the Wind' (Obey) 1966. He designed most of his sets.

By many he will be remembered for his great charm, the gentle manner in which he brought out the best in his cast, his ability and professionalism, and his very wide general knowledge. He had a ready wit and delightful, often puckish, sense of humour. By some he will be remembered for introducing and opening up for them the pleasures of the amateur stage.

(Ilay Martin)

SEASON 1990 - 1991

David Valler

David Valler, the husband of the recently deceased past Barn Theatre Chairman, Lesley Valler died in tragic circumstances. David first appeared on the Barn Stage in Wizard of Oz in 1975 and for some years after, appeared regularly as actor, dance arranger and musician (he was a professional guitarist) with memorable contributions in 'Put That Light Out', 'Joseph and his Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat' and 'Habeas Corpus'. He also appeared for the 'Hertfordshire Players' and 'The Welwyn Thaliens'

In more recent years, his support was mostly confined to his role as 'Regent' to the Barn Theatre Chairmanship of his late wife, Lesley.

Our thoughts and condolences are offered to his family and close friends.

Joan Dobbyn

Joan had a lifelong interest and involvement in amateur theatre in Welwyn Garden City. The earliest recorded programme credit was for refreshments for 'The Rose and the Ring' for Welwyn Drama Club in 1963, the last was as prompter for 'The Dickens Christmas Carol Show' in 1980 for the Barn Theatre Club. Joan was also a very active member of Welwyn Thaliens and the official timekeeper for the Welwyn Drama Festival.

For some years during the late 60's and early 70's, she was the drama critic of 'The Welwyn Times' and although conservative in her views on the organization of local drama societies, her reviews in the newspaper showed she was totally at ease with the rapidly changing face of modern drama.

Our sincere condolences are offered to her husband John.

Cyril Heath

Cyril, who died towards the end of the season, was the drama critic of 'The Hertfordshire Mercury', a post he held for over 30 years. Everyone involved in amateur drama in Hertford and the surrounding area eagerly awaited his end of season 'Oscars' in the form of a summary of the achievements of various societies

and individuals. The Barn used to be included until his editor decided that Welwyn Garden City was not in 'The Mercury's' circulation area. Cyril, however, continued to be a regular member of the Barn audience.

SEASON 1991 – 1992

Winfred Butler

Winifred died in October, just before her 85th birthday. In a tribute from the pulpit, both poignant and amusing, the Reverend J. Ingamells reminded us of her very full life and the various aspects of her personality which, as he put it, made an 'unforgettable character'.

"Born in Shepherds Bush in 1906, the 11th of 13 children of a cabinet-maker, she won a scholarship to Godolphin and Latymer School in 1918, and eventually became a teacher, spending many years at the Howard School in Welwyn Garden City"

As well as her service in the community in the hospice movement and reading for the blind, we of course remember her as an actress, director, Team Steward and director of the Welwyn Festival, and involvement in many background jobs without which we could not exist. Apart from the acknowledged roles in the Box Office or as prompter, she also stoked the boilers and cleaned the theatre in the period after the war and continually reminded others, in her bass voice, of the need to cherish the building.

Her first recorded appearance was as 'Maria' in the 1936 production of 'Twelfth Night' in the Dell at Sherrards Wood, and in our theatre as one of the women of Canterbury in 'Murder in the Cathedral' in 1938. Her first appearance at the Welwyn Festival was in 1939, and she was involved with two of the three productions after the outbreak of war before the theatre closed for the duration.

The Welwyn Drama Club re-formed in 1946 with Fred as Secretary and for the next 40 years or so her involvement with the Drama Club, The Folk Players and from 1969 the Barn Theatre Club, was unbroken. Her on-stage presence was recognised with a Welwyn Festival Medal as Best Actress in 1960 as Lady Weston in the Folk Players, 'Remember Caesar' and again in 1965 as Dona Laura in 'A Sunny Morning' (Welwyn Drama Club). Her last appearance on the Barn Stage was in 'The Dickens Christmas Carol Show' in 1980 and her final involvement in a production was as prompter for 'The Dresser' (1983).

Her stern appearance and stentorian voice masked a friendly, lively and gifted personality who lived a life (that was not always easy for her) to the full. We are proud to have been part of that life.

Brian Jolly

Brian's sudden untimely death occurred just before Christmas. Brian was deeply involved with the Barn for over 20 years until the late 1970's and served as a Council

Member. His primary interests were in lighting and publicity in which capacity he served many productions. He was directly responsible for the adoption of the stylised Owl symbol as the Barn Theatre Club logo. A Head teacher in Woolmer Green, Brian's other principal interest was sailing and he was on the Stage Crew of the Welwyn Drama Festival.

Our sincere condolences are offered to Tina and the boys, and to Ron and Vi.

Margaret Selley and Wilf Ruderman

In January, the deaths were recorded of Margaret Selley and Wilf Ruderman, older members with long associations with the Club and the theatre.

Ken Skuse

Reported in February was the death of Ken at his home in Birkenhead. Ken was a regular member of set-building and back-stage crews, and an enthusiastic barman, back in the 1970's before he moved away.

Dorothy 'Dot' Otterburn

'Dot' spent many years in Rickmansworth where she was a member of Rickmansworth Players before moving to Welwyn Garden City. Her contribution to the Barn was twofold; she was responsible for backstage refreshments for several years and she held strong views on theatrical taste and fashion which she could impart eloquently.

SEASON 1992 – 1993

Carlos Palomeque

We sadly record the sudden death of Carlos Palomeque in February. A regular supporter of many productions and activities, Carlos was also an enthusiastic Front of House Manager. I am not aware that he ever appeared on the Barn stage, but he had a brief moment in the crowd of a Hertfordshire Players production at The Minack in Cornwall, though he preferred more modestly to use his talent in marshalling the car park.

His cheerful greeting in the slight Spanish accent still retained after more than 50 years in this country always prefaced a genuine enquiring interest in everyone he spoke to.

Wildly travelled, he was a fascinating companion and a warm friend.

Elisabeth Thomas

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of Elisabeth Thomas after her long and cheerful fight against cancer. She was best known in the Barn for being a

loyal audience supporter, especially when her husband, Ron, was treading the boards.

For many years I had the privilege of working with Elisabeth, first at the Sir Frederic Osborn School and subsequently at Stanborough. She was a first-class school librarian; nothing ever being too much trouble, and she very often conducted researches on her own initiative to support some study or enterprise. I was one of many to benefit from her help.

As we were preparing for the Barn's production of 'Stepping Out', Elisabeth said that she would love to be involved but could not see how. Knowing her dedication and thoroughness I suggested that she might like to prompt. She did and all of us valued her enthusiasm and support.

Elisabeth will be greatly missed by all who knew her We extend our sympathies to Ron, Rachel and Nick.
(Shirley Shaw)

Gladys Avison

Gladys was a regular supporter of the Barn and the Welwyn Drama Festival where her husband, Tony, appeared on stage in the two decades after the war and was a vigorous and knowledgeable Vice-Chairman of the Barn Theatre Club soon after its formation in 1969, and a Director of the Drama Festival.

Greta Garrad

Greta played in the production of 'Camino Real' in 1966 (Welwyn Drama Club) at the Barn, and was active with other drama societies in this area. Her daughter has donated a number of props from Greta's collection to the Barn.

Ronald Hinde

He always enjoyed belonging to the Barn when he lived in Welwyn Garden.

Janet Shuck

We sadly record the recent death of Janet Shuck. She had moved to the West Country some years ago, but in a bare half-dozen appearances at the Barn between 1971 and 1979 she illuminated our stage with some memorable performances, beginning with 'The Flip Side', and finally in 'Forget-Me-Not-Lane'. She won the Welwyn Medal in 1973 at the Festival for her portrayal of Laura Logan in 'Marble Arch'. She will perhaps be best remembered for her Lady Torrance in 'Orpheus Descending' in 1974.

My last contact with Janet was when she wrote a personal appreciation of Mervyn Lloyd for Barn News on the occasion of his death in 1989. I quote, '...he moved through my life, and my life was made the richer...'. Warm and generous words, and appropriate to Janet herself. She had a rare talent, and for a while we were fortunate that she shared it with us.
(Keith Thompson)

SEASON 1993 – 1994

Lewis Ford MBE

Council sincerely regretted the death of our only 'life' member, Lewis Ford. He not only graced the stage with his set building and his acting until, to quote him ' he could not bend nor remember the words well enough', but he had also been a generous benefactor in his later years. He was a quiet and gentle man who will be much missed.

Harry Jacobs

We heard with great regret of the death of Harry Jacobs who joined the Barn under the auspices of Fred and Hedy Faulkner. He will be much missed by his friends both for his company and his culinary skills.

Lou Monzeglio

We have sadly heard today (October 19th) of the sudden death of Lou Monzeglio. A powerful actor with special talents in comedy, he had recently appeared as the butler Oswald in the award-winning 'Fall of The House Of Usher' and often played leading roles in Neil Simon productions, of which 'Last of The Red Hot Lovers' and 'The Sunshine Boys' will especially remain in the memory.

Among his retirement occupations he had become the Club's semi-official rehearsal photographer, and much of this work appeared in our printed programmes.

We offer our deepest sympathy to Carol and their daughters.

Joyce Putley

We sadly record the death of Joyce Putley in December. The Club's archives reveal that Joyce was first actively involved at the Barn for Welwyn Drama Club in a One-Act play in 1937 as Nanny in a play called 'Crisis' in an evening of Four Plays.

Her last recorded contribution was in the wardrobe team for 'Rosencrantz and Guildenstern....' In 1976 but she was a regular member of our audience until the beginning of this season.

SEASON 1994 – 1995

Deborah Thompson

We sadly record the death of Deborah Thompson on October 18th after a long illness. Our earliest note of Deborah's involvement with the Club starts with the opening production of '*Fings Ain't What They Used T'Be*' in 1969 and it was in musicals that she made her mark at first, most notably as a Kit-Kat girl in the 1973 '*Cabaret*', which she also jointly choreographed. Regularly in demand as a dancer and dance director (*The Wizard of Oz*, *The Winters's Tale*, *The Dickens Christmas Carol Show*, *Anything Goes*, *Peter Pan* as the latter) she also essayed a wide range of acting roles including Jessica in '*The Merchant....*', Carmen in '*The Balcony*', Estelle in the '*Rose Tattoo*', Karen in '*The Children's Hour*', and Shen-The in '*The Good Person of Szechwan*'.

More recent dancing roles were in '*Irma La Douce*', '*Anything Goes*', and the 1986 revival of '*Cabaret*'. She was also a competent and willing Property Mistress and

Assistant Stage Manager. Always vivacious and firendly, even during her final illness, when she was still involved as best, she could be in our productions, she will be missed.

Our deepest sympathy is offered to Peggy, Lia and Phaedra.

Geoff Barker

We have received news of the death in Decmebre of our old friend Geoff Barker. A egular Barn News contributor as an invited critic, he was on of the original 'Company of Ten' and had been an actor and director with them for many years. I last saw him in their production of 'The Fosdyke Saga' about three years ago.

Between 1954 and 1959 Geoff was a member of the Welwyn Drama Club and appeared several times on the Barn stage, including Scrub in 'The Beaux Stratgem', his own production of 'Escapade' and lastly 'The Seven Year Itch',

Our sympathy is offered to Liz and the family.

(Keith Thompson)

Myrtle Waldron

Members with long memories will be saddened to hear of the recent death of Myrtle Waldron.

She was very active in Barn affairs in the 1950s and is still remembered for her appearances in 'The Foolish Gentlewoman', 'Loves Labours Lost' and 'Poit of Departure' – to mention but three. She stage managed 'Captain Carvallo' and was property mistress for other shows of the period. Offstage she achieved an enviable reputation as a prompter and was much appreciated by Directors and actors alike. Being unfailingly ready when needed but never intrusive. Her drama activities ceased when she moved to London, but for many years subsequently she was deeply involved with lay work at Westminster Cathedral, where a Requiem Mass was held for her on 20th March.

SEASON 1995 – 1996

Carol Robson

We were very sorry to learn of the recent death of Barn member Mrs Carol Robson, who was a regular attender at Barn productions, and also delivered Barn News in the Parkway area. We send our condolences to her husband and daughters.

Terry Parsons

We were saddened to hear that Terry Parsons died on 21st November 1995 following a heart attack a week earlier.

Many of us will remember Terry's loyal support of Joan during the years when sh ran our Box Office virtually single handed, keeping her company whilst she cashed up at the end of each evening and ensuring that she returned home safely with the cashbox.

We extend our sympathy to Joan and to their children, Adrian, Helen and Neil.

Kathy Lloyd

We were saddened to hear of the death last month of Kathy Lloyd who had suffered a major stroke and died two weeks later.

I first met Kathy when she was already a senior and 'old established' Committee Member of The Welwyn Folk Players in the middle 1960s at which time the Folk Players and Drama Club were joining forces for productions, just before amalgamation. Over the next thirty years our paths crossed frequently because it seemed that Kathy was nearly always involved in the costuming of our plays; as Wardrobe Mistress, dresser, designer, consultant or simply the best source of accurate information about historical costumes.

She successfully ran her own costume company, Festival Costumes, for some years before selling the business and 'retiring' but she never really retired because her help was often sought and always willingly given. She was also Wardrobe Mistress to the Hertfordshire Players on many occasions.

In view of her continuous work at our theatre over such a long period it is odd that I can find no record of her contribution in the best-known of the Club archives written by Harry Stull. This is no criticism of Harry whose work is always regarded as complete. More likely it is a reflection of the many productions on which she advised without taking the formal wardrobe role, and the period when she was professionally involved and therefore took no programme credit.

She will be sadly missed, and we offer our condolences to Arthur, John, Vivian and their family.

Bryce MacGill

Members were shocked by the sudden and totally unexpected death of Bryce MacGill on 4 March, such a short time after he had given his wonderfully entertaining performance as Bill (the one in the wheelchair) in 'It Runs in the Family'. Bryce joined the Barn after retirement from a distinguished career with ICI which took him abroad for the last twenty years. His membership of the Barn dates from the 91/92 season when he played Canon Chasuble in 'The Importance of Being Ernest'. This was to be the first of eight main-stage productions in which he played major parts, including Guy Burgess in 'Single Spies', Lockit in 'The Beggar's Opera' and the Rev. Clement Mercer in 'When we are Married', playing always with style, clear characterisation and attack. His first love, however, was always high comedy and farce and it was in the three 'Run' plays of the past two years where his considerable acting ability was seen to most advantage. Indeed, the Barn News visiting critic of last month wrote of Bryce's performance in 'It Runs in the Family', '....a masterly, well thought-out characterisation with razor sharp farce timing and his splendidly evil grin reminded me of Bill Owen at his very best'.

Bryce not only gave much to the Barn on stage, he was also a member of Council and of the Marketing Group in which he had a particular responsibility for liaison with several of our sponsors over the past two seasons. In fact, one of the last things he did just a few days before his death was to complete the negotiations with Marks and Spencers for their sponsorship of 'Racing Demons'. Bryce will be remembered with considerable affection and esteem for his good humour, good sense and his abundant energy, drive and commitment. He was a lovely man and will be sorely

missed. We all send our most sincere condolences to his wife vGlen and to their four daughters.

(Keith Thompson)

SEASON 1996 – 1997

Ron Jolly

Before retirement, Ron Jolly had been a teacher in the Garden City and Hatfield, and it was during this time that he became involved with drama. His activities in the Welwyn Drama Club and, following amalgamation, the Barn Theatre Club were numerous, to say the least. Between 1947 and 1988 there was only one year when he was not active in some aspect of the the Clubs: Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Committee Member, Director, Set Designer, Stage Manager and Actor.

It was appropriate, therefore, that on the afternoon of Saturday 20th July, it was the auditorium of the Barn Theatre that was nearly filled by approximately 120 people, who had come to celebrate the life of Ron Jolly, who had died eighteen days earlier.

An impressive display of heis work greeted them in the foyer and the Clubroom on their arrival. Ron's skill as a painter was well known throughout the Garden City, and his sensitive and delicate water-colours and bold, outrageous modern oils (known as we learned during the afternoon, as 'Gorblimeys') give pleasure to their owners in many, many households in the town and beyond.

The stage setting which met his friends as they entered the auditorium was evocative of the relaxed, informal character of the man (to which so many of the speakers attested) – just two armchairs, a small table and an easel with a watercolour on it. On stage as well were a piano and a beautiful display of flowers arranged by Barbara Foster.

Martyn Jolly, Ron's eldest grandson, began the afternoon with a simple, sincere and moving appreciation of his grandfather. It set the tone of the afternoon – one of celebration – beautifully, and Martyn was the ideal person to begin, being the third generation of Jollys to become actively involved in the work of the Barn Theatre Club (he's lighting operator on *Habeas Corpus*, being trained – as his late father Brian was – by Louis Davis).

The role of presenter and 'link-man' was then taken up by Richard Foster, who informally introduced each speaker with wit and charm.

There were reminiscences and tributes from Ron's worlds of the theatre, of painting, of education – and some warm and funny anecdotes from all of these. Those taking part in the entertainment – for that's what it was – were: Roger Cashmore, Jo Cooper, Louis Davis (who in addition to his contribution on Ron and the Barn Theatre, was accompanist to all the musical items in the programme), Neil Gill, John Gloyn, Mike Goring, Janet Oldland, Bernadine Palomeque (reading a letter from Mollie Wilson), Belinda Putley (reading a letter from Jean Bridges, as well as giving her own tribute), and Jack Wood (reading a pastiche on Stanley Holloway's monologues written by Ron and posthumously discovered among his papers).

It had been an afternoon of tribute, of memory, and above all of warm, genuine appreciation of a man who had contributed a great deal in his eighty years of life, and would be very well and affectionately remembered for it. The thirty minutes or so was wound up by Ron's daughter-in-law, Christina Jolly (who had organised the event) saying a few words of thanks and leading the assembled friends in singing

The Rainbow Song. And what better for a man to whom painting had meant so much: "Red and yellow and pink and green...."

Vi Jolly (Ron's widow) writes:

"How grateful and pleased Di, Chris (Tina), and all the family and I were to see so many of Ron's friends assembled for the celebration of his life, and how touched we were by the many warm and wonderful things said about him. We're so grateful to everybody involved in the preparation and staging of the afternoon, and to those who gave to the Cansearch Collection in the foyer, which raised nearly £200.

There was sadness sometimes, of course, but it was also a joyful occasion and we will always remember it. My thanks to you all."

Mike McKeever

My own days of Barn involvement have long since passed and, had I not, as a young teacher, taken up lodgings with two active Folk Players, they might never have happened at all! The people I have met and the friends I have made during a 23-year span, reads like a list of Who's Who in local Drama circles, and one of the drawbacks of being 'in retirement' is not seeing many of those people as often as one used to. 'Old Faces', however, do still meet up, though unfortunately, these days, on mainly sad occasions. Such an occasion was only a week or so ago, when we gathered to mourn the passing of my long-standing and dearest 'dramatic' friend, Mike McKeever.

By the time I appeared in my first play, standing on my first McKeever set, in the Welwyn Folk Players' production of "Waiting in the Wings" he'd been dramatically 'at it?' in Welwyn Garden for nearly 10 years. To the best of archive knowledge, Mike began acting for the Folk Players in their 1960 production of "Look Back in Anger" and from that moment, as far as local drama was concerned, he never looked back again!

Amazingly, another four years passed before someone discovered he could also design sets - his first for the Folk Players' production of "The Chiltern Hundreds" and his last for the Barn's "Daisy Pulls It Off" in 1991.

Thirty-one years, from Welwyn Folk Players to Barn Theatre Club with ICI Dramatic Club sprinkled in between. During those years, Mike was involved in 81 productions - producing 14 of them - acting in 25 of them and designing the sets for 49 of them, with the odd bit of stage-management and costume design thrown in for good measure! It was not unusual for him to be rehearsing a part in one play, to be at the building stage for another and have a third on the drawing board, all at the same time!

I wasn't around to see his 'Estragon' in "Waiting for Godot", but those who were, still speak of it. He was a master of cameo roles which invariably became scene-stealers! The delighted leer of the medical Major, wielding a hypodermic in "Reluctant Heroes"; the interminable time he spent in a dustbin as 'Nag' in "Endgame" only lifting his head to call for his 'pap'; and the skilful but panic-stricken way he manhandled a rapidly collapsing table in "The Coarse Acting Show" - from a wheelchair, are just a few personal favourites.

When he became the first Stage Director of the newly formed Barn Theatre Club in 1969, I was lucky enough to be his assistant-cum protege-cum sidekick- cum whatever! The sets I witnessed from doodles to completion were always stunning

either in their simplicity or in their complete transformation, cleverly made possible in a matter of gruelling minutes! A Set Design for Mike, rarely stopped there - it usually meant that he built or helped to build either all or part of it, as well as the painting and often the decor and he could disguise the infamous 'Barn Beams' more ingeniously than anyone before or since!

I learnt such a lot, not least of which was not having to paint the backs of flats because the audience couldn't see them! By the same token, the only time he ever admonished me was when I left nails and rough edges at the back - the audience might not be able to see them but the cast and crew had to move and work there and no-one was going to draw blood or tear a costume on a McKeever set! He created amazing levels - everything had to work smoothly - those playing out front had to feel that the place was real - nothing trembled or rattled nor looked unfinished - no Victorian parlour was complete without picture rails and wainscoting! Remember the seven doors in "Boeing-Boeing" that opened at the touch of a finger and at such lightning speed - the change from drawing room to desert island with running water for "The Admirable Crichton" and from bedroom to underground home to pirate ship for "Peter Pan", to say nothing of "Moby Dick"

Festivals did not escape his attention either and often sets he designed for use at the Barn had to incorporate the necessary mechanics to be dismantled and re-assembled on vastly different stages - not an easy task when you take five rows of theatre seats on a moving platform for "The Real Inspector Hound" or a complete stage and backstage for "The Dresser". When you'd moved a McKeever set to Welwyn, Letchworth, Luton, Cambridge, Felixstowe or Buxton - you knew you'd moved it!

No Producer's vision was too wild an idea, no cast too large to manage and no newcomer too inexperienced to be given an opportunity. My most vivid memories are of the many late nights/early mornings, when there were still numerous gaps about the stage for the wind to blow through - either up a ladder or cramped in some impossible corner or sprawled on the floor with either a hammer or paintbrush in hand and just Mike for company. There he'd be, ambling around, tugging at his beard and muttering or occasionally declaiming 'Knicky-Knacky-Knoo' to keep us both awake! MAGONAHY was Mike's name for mahogany - he was so fond of that colour and no set was complete without a splash of it somewhere!

His richness and many talents were in ample evidence even beyond the theatre - in his ideas and designs for his own home both inside and out - his neighbourliness and concern for local issues and commitment to his ideals - his support for the local Hospice - his love of Italy and all things Italian - his recitations and his fashioning of wood into the most wondrous things from tiny Nativity figures to a family rocking horse and even a four-poster bed!

What a kind thoughtful, patient, instructive, skilful little genius he was. I wound' mind betting that the celestial wherever is coming in for some new design at this very moment! The only thing I ever remember him complaining about was his knackered knees - he was convinced he was getting shorter by the hour as they crumbled under him! Shrinking or not - in Mike McKeever, I learnt the true meaning of the phrase - 'a giant of a man'.

I loved you Mike and I miss you.....

(Carole Muscroft)

SEASON 1997 – 1998

Sheila Hill

We have received a letter from Ray Hill giving us the sad news of his wife's death in July, after a short illness. Ray and Sheila were regular supporters of the Barn, and although Ray was actively involved in the 70s and 80s (Fosdyke Saga, Habeas Corpus, The Odd Couple, The Elephant Man) and Sheila was usually 'audience' she was a keen and cheerful enthusiastic member.

We send our condolences to Ray on his sad loss.

Clyde Wilson

Clyde was born in County Durham on 4th November 1934. He came to live in London at about the age of ten and was educated at the William Ellis Grammar School in Camden. On leaving school he joined the Post Office Savings Bank.

During his National Service with the RAF he was stationed in Egypt, after which he returned to the Post Office Savings Bank for some years. In 1958 he married Joan on whom apparently, he had had his eye since he was about fourteen (she had attended Camden Girls High School and they had been in the same youth group).

In 1962 he transferred to work in the Post Office itself and for about two years commuted weekly from London to Leeds. Joan joined him in Leeds in 1964, together with Steve and Julia who had come along by this time. The family lived in Leeds for five years, and on Clyde's promotion within the Post Office they came to live in their present home in Welwyn in 1969.

1969 was, of course, the year that the Barn Theatre Club as we now know it was established, and Clyde became involved in helping to build the set for the opening production of 'Fings'. An early brush with Mervyn Lloyd, the director of the production, over the exact position of a flat was the start both of a cordial relationship with Mervyn and of a long track-record of set building and designing that lasted until Clyde's death. It is rather ironical that, although Joan was keen to join the Barn in 1969, Clyde's only experience of amateur theatre prior to that time had been when he played the eponymous hero in 'The Winslow Boy' with the Gospel Oak Methodist Youth Club.

Whilst his subsequent on-stage appearances with the Barn were very rare, he soon began to play major roles in the Club's organisation. He had two spells as Stage Director on the former Barn Council and also served as Bar Chairman during which time he planned and organised the re-designing of the Clubroom. He also took a great interest over the years in the social activities of the Club, developing some skill in large-scale catering arrangements.

He took early retirement from the Post Office in 1989, his final position being Head of Property Management and Development in that organisation, and he was then able to devote even more time to the Barn. He became the Club Chairman in 1992 and continued to work regularly and almost single-handedly at the constant re-building, maintenance and refurbishment the premises require. He had always said that he would do just three years as Chairman and he was, I think, quite glad to give

up the particular responsibilities of that post. Within the new management structure, however, he continued to serve as Productions Director, devising various sets of guide-lines to help directors of plays grapple with the complexities of their task.

What may prove to be his most lasting achievement, if we are successful in our application, was his involvement in the preparation of the Club's current national lottery bid. He spear-headed the process in its early stages, characteristically writing the initial draft almost on his own. As the size of the project grew and more people became involved in the planning process he retained a leading role as Project Champion (to use national lottery-speak). Though he often became disheartened by the frustrations of the work he never gave up his dogged determination to see it through, and it is sad that his illness caused him to resign shortly before we were able to complete and submit the application.

His unflagging enthusiasm for and commitment to the Barn Theatre will be much missed. Organisations such as ours depend critically on the willingness of people like Clyde to give their time, energy and skills, often in unglamorous ways with no spot-light illuminating their vital importance. Few people can have given more of those things to the Club than Clyde Wilson.

(Neil Gill)

Rosamund Nichol

Members whose memories go back a considerable number of years will be saddened to hear of the recent death of Ros Nichol. Ros was the middle of the three daughters of Joyce and Arthur Putley who were involved in the early days of the Barn Theatre. Soon after she returned from America after the war, she met and married Richard Nichol, son of Muriel and James Nichol whose involvement with drama in the town goes back even further to the early 1930s. Theirs was probably the first marriage of the second-generation Welwyn Garden City children who spent a lot of their time at the Barn Theatre playing together whilst their parents performed!

Before the family moved to Scotland, she appeared in many plays for the old Welwyn Drama Club between 1947 and 1961. Notable amongst these was as 'Stella' in Mervyn Lloyd's production of 'Streetcar Named Desire' in 1957. She was an avid backstage worker and also served on the committee of the Welwyn Drama Club during its Jubilee Season 1959/60.

She was a lovely person and we offer our condolences to her husband, Richard and their family, including her sisters Margaret Money and Belinda Putley.

SEASON 1998 – 1999

Margaret Alexander

We are very sorry to hear of the death of Margaret in June. She and her husband have been very faithful season ticket holders for many years and have supported all our productions. Margaret herself helped on the box office for a number of seasons and latterly has been a stalwart on the coffee stall. She will be greatly missed and we send our condolences to her husband.

Phil Tomlin

In our last issue we reported the death of Phil on September 19th. A staunch member of H.D. and O.S. in Hertford, where he lived, Phil also found time to perform for COPS and the Barn. Comedy was his forte, especially in pantomime, and he founded the H.D. and O.S. Music-Hall group which toured with great success.

Closer to Welwyn Garden, he appeared regularly for the Barnstormers. All those who saw his comic foil (white boots, bowler hat and a torn vest complementing his unspeakable black tights) to the late John Goodland's increasingly irritated and flustered straight man enjoyed a performance of rich vulgarity and impeccable timing.

He appeared frequently in musicals, less often in straight plays, but gave memorable characterisations in 'The Fire Raisers' and 'My Three Angels' at COPS and will be fondly remembered for a warm and touching Schulz in our first production of 'Cabaret.'

At the funeral his life-long friend Peter Wells spoke of Phil's good-natured friendship and his infectious sense of fun. He concluded with the words....'Phil — exit stage left — to warm and wonderful memories and great applause.'

Our condolences are offered to Sally and Mary-Jane.

Pauline Thacker

Although she had not recently attended our productions due to her declining health, Pauline, who died in November, had in earlier years been deeply involved with our theatre.

In the 1950's Pauline worked with the I.C.I. Dramatic Society, at that time one of the most flourishing groups in the district, mainly doing costumes and wardrobe but also helping with front-of-house refreshments and programmes. She represented that group on the Committee of the Barn Theatre Association and was for a time Assistant Secretary of the Association, which managed the theatre in the days when it was used by several societies, before the formation of the Barn Theatre Club in 1969,

In the 1960's work as wardrobe, publicity and production secretary for Welwyn Drama Club plays eventually led to Pauline being appointed the first Wardrobe Controller of the newly formed Barn Theatre Club, organising the stocks and the hiring arrangements, and she also did costume for Interluder's productions at The Minack Theatre in Cornwall.

Her last mention in the Club's archives is as a researcher for Eric Chorley's staged history of the development of the Garden City, 'Hippo on The Doorstep', in 1980. While her health allowed, Pauline remained a regular supporter of the Barn. Our condolences are offered to her family and friends.

Nancy Hart

With the death of Nancy Hart on 20 December 1998, in the Isle of Wight, another link with the early history of drama at the Barn has been severed.

As Miss Nancy Saxon she was first elected to the Committee of the Welwyn Folk Players in June 1939, and was joint Members' Secretary from 1940 until 1961. During

the 1939 – 1945 war Nancy, with Marjorie Hicks and Lilian Houghton, helped to organise the activities of the Folk Players, which was the only local drama group to have a continuous wartime programme.

Nancy's acting career started in 1939 with a part in 'Fortunato', and ended in 1968 with 'Waiting in the Wings'. She helped with costumes, properties, prompting and as a stage assistant on many occasions, and also organised play readings. She and husband John (also a very active Folk Player, who died twenty years ago) retired to the Isle of Wight soon after the Folk Players became part of the present Barn Theatre Club in 1969.

Gill Newton

Ray Newton's wife Gill died on 16th March. Although not a Member of the Barn she was a regular member of our audience, either supporting Ray when he was performing or as a valued critic of our productions for Barn News, a task she had undertaken with distinction for several years.

She regularly acted and directed for the Company of Players, Hertford, where her highly praised version of 'Cider with Rosie' last summer broke new ground in its imaginative use of The Little Theatre as an 'in-the-round' venue, and won the East Herts Festival of Theatre. She was also a regular performer at The Minack Theatre with The Hertfordshire Players.

Our deepest sympathy is offered to Ray, Tom and Katie in their sad loss. Ray has asked me to thank all those who sent letters to the family for their kindness and support. He will be unable to answer them all personally but is deeply appreciative of them.

We will remember Gill not only for her love of theatre and her skill in its practice, but also, as a very warm friend.

(Keith Thompson)

Neil Gill

Neil Gill died on May 9th just a few weeks after a serious illness was diagnosed. In his three years as Chairman, he had skilfully shepherded the Club through increasingly difficult times. Whilst jealously protecting and even helping to lift our artistic achievements, his efforts had also to be directed towards the financial survival of the Club and coping with the insatiable demand for Members to get involved with volunteering for all the unfinished tasks which a building like ours demands. The process of changing the entire management structure of the Club and the creation of the post of Artistic Director he had completed, all with his special gifts of diplomacy and good humour.

As an actor Neil had excelled in a variety of roles. Falstaffian in appearance, he had essayed dukes, doctors, statesmen and industrialists with expertise. Very recently we will remember a scene-stealing cameo as the Doctor in 'Hobson's Choice.'; in the 70's his archetypal Victorian mill-owner Grimpot in 'O, Glorious Jubilee' which not only allowed him to demonstrate his comedy skills, but also his rich singing voice, -and in between these roles, many others. As a former Cambridge pupil of C.S. Lewis he treasured his role as Lewis' brother Warnie, in 'Shadowlands.'

At a glorious funeral at St. Francis, (standing room only — 'he would have loved it' as one of his sons remarked) where he was Churchwarden, those of us from the Barn

discovered other sides to this remarkable man. He was a retired Director of Education for the Borough of Barnet; there was a eulogy from the Bishop of Bedford for Neil's Diocesan work; loving and amusing tributes from his sons, Chris and Tim, for his qualities as a father and grandfather, and finally Irene's reading of Neil's own choice, Tennyson's 'Crossing The Bar.'

Our deepest sympathy is offered to Irene, and Chris and Tim and their families. We will all miss him.

Tony Avison (I)

Older Members of the Barn, in particular, were saddened to hear of the recent death of Tony Avison. But newer Members, who know the Barn Theatre Club only as it is now structured, may be unaware of the part he played in getting it established.

Although Tony Avison was a long-time resident of Welwyn Garden City and a Drama Club Member, family commitments and pressure of work as a senior research chemist (and later Production Manager) at Roche Products meant that he never had as much spare time as he wished to devote to acting before the 1960's; but his offstage contribution was considerable. In the 1950's particularly, when the idea of combining WGC's several drama groups into one large club was far from universally popular, Tony was one of the most consistent and enthusiastic advocates of amalgamation; his speech as retiring Chairman at the Drama Club's A.G.M. in 1963 was particularly impressive in this connection. As Chairman of the Barn Theatre Association, and as a member of the Amalgamation Steering Committee and Study Group, he was instrumental in reconciling the many conflicting viewpoints among the various bodies involved, so paving the way for the eventual amalgamation of local drama groups in 1969. Tony was Vice-Chairman of the Barn Theatre Club from 1971 to 1976 and represented the Barn at the Civic Ball held to celebrate the opening of Campus West in 1973.

Tony first appeared on stage in the Drama Club's production of 'The Complaisant Lover' in 1962 and his first acting part with the new Barn Theatre Club was as Pertius in 'The Long Sunset' eight years later. He was regularly seen as House Manager at most Barn shows in the 1970's.

In 1974 he was invited to become a Director of the Welwyn Festival Association and was primarily responsible for the Drama Festival's Front of House organisation - a task he performed with smooth efficiency until his final retirement in 1995. He did not enjoy the best of health in recent years, but his sudden passing was nonetheless unexpected. We offer our condolences to Chris, Paul and Yvonne, all of whom (like Tony's wife Gladys, who predeceased him by a few years) were actively involved at the Barn in the 1960's.

Tony Avison (II)

I was two and a half years old when my dad, Tony, first appeared on the Barn stage as Su in Lady Precious Stream in March 1948. I don't remember it at all but I do recall the delight, a few years later, seeing the programme and his name in print [along now with a lot of others who have also sadly departed.]

The Minister of Foreign Affairs in Lady Precious Stream was played by Ralph Daubeny and he doubled up as a soldier and a warden with Richard Rhodes.

Tony's middle name was d'Aubigny, some family members spell it Daubenyor Dawbney [in Australia!] and we do not know whether Ralph was any kind of a relative. Old Barn Theatre programmes can be informative and nostalgic as I am finding out whilst tidying up Dad's things.

Our family were introduced to the theatre by Tony's Barn activities and these encompassed acting, set building, coffee making and serving, stewarding and front of house management. My brother Paul appeared in Escapade with amongst others, Belinda Putley, Mervyn Lloyd and Tony and The Glass Menagerie also with Belinda Putley and David Shaw and directed by Eric Farley. Yvonne, my sister, used to travel to Cornwall with H.O.D.S for the annual Minack Theatre visit. Our mother Gladys helped out wherever she could. I was the dead waiter in the Barn's youth drama festival production of Two Gentlemen of Soho.

Tony was a good administrator and found himself on the committee of Welwyn Drama Club in 1957 and was Chairman from 1961 to 1963. During the sixties there were murmurings and movements afoot to amalgamate the several clubs which used the Barn Theatre on a regular basis. At the time, the Barn was administered by The Barn Theatre Association Ltd., and Tony was its Chairman. The plan was to merge the three main clubs, which had agreed amalgamation, into this company and use it as a vehicle to form the new Barn Theatre Club. These were heady days and the buzz word around the Barn was the amalgamation which certainly did not always enjoy universal support. Negotiations were delicate, protracted and always conducted in a proper and diplomatic way. All meetings were recorded and correspondence dealt with.

Who can remember, or maybe want to forget, "What Next Mrs Worthington?" the teach in and discussion which lasted all day at the Barn on a very wet 21st May 1967. This resulted in Mervyn Lloyd, who chaired these discussions, producing his report "The Long Sunday" in July. UN / NATO eat your hearts out, this was serious business.

But all's well that ends well, and once approval in principle was obtained from the various factions, the structures for the new Barn Theatre Club had to be built both physically and administratively. It involved Commission of the New Towns, the landlord of the theatre, and acquisition of additional premises from Howardsgate Club [Bill Griffin was then Managing Director of Welwyn Department Store] and I C I Plastics [Bertie Ogle was finance director] and all of this required lawyers and accountants as a new lease and company was being created. A steering committee was set up under Tony's chairmanship for these purposes. Membership of the committee comprised, Bertie Ogle, Louis Davis, Judith Claxton, Denys Wells, Peggy Edgerley, Maurice Kolker, Reg Wiles and Pauline Thacker. The Barn Theatre Club was born on 10 June 1969 when Tony invited Louis Davis to be the Chairman of the new club at its first AGM which had immediately followed the last AGM of the Barn Theatre Association Ltd. Obviously the whole process involved many devoted and not so devoted members of several clubs, all of whom are too numerous to mention here, but all played their respective parts in the successful formation of the club.

Tony was vice chairman in 1972 and again in 1976. He represented the Barn at the Civic Ball held to celebrate the opening of Campus West in 1973. The same year, he was front of house at the Welwyn Drama Festival and in 1974 Judith Claxton, secretary to the festival, formally wrote to invite Tony to join the board of directors

of Welwyn Festival Association. He was front of house for the festival until 1994, following which he became one of the festival's Vice-Presidents.

Following his retirement from the day job [the one that paid] after a lifelong career at Roche Products in 1986, Tony was less active at the Barn as Gladys was not well and required most of his attention. Following their Golden Anniversary in 1992, Gladys died in December that year and Tony never really recovered from his loss. Tony's own health was not the best after he was diagnosed insulin dependant diabetic in 1989, and he died of pancreatic cancer in Elizabeth House at QE2 hospital on 20 April 1999. I have described his legacy to the club above. To his family, our loss is immense, but we have all been left with a great fondness for the theatre and happy memories of our various doings at the Barn all those years ago.

(Chris Avison)

SEASON 1999 – 2000

Peggy Thompson

Peggy died on Sunday 19 September and the funeral took place at Knebworth on Monday 27th.

Peggy came to the Barn via the old Norton Abrasives drama group (where she worked for some years) and first appears in the Barn's records as the Assistant Stage Manager of Beth Maxwell's production of 'A Letter from The General' for the Welwyn Drama Club in 1965. This was the beginning of her regular involvement in varying backstage posts; in 1969 she was Mervyn Lloyd's Production Secretary for the Barn Theatre Club's inaugural show 'Fings Ain't Wot They Used T'be.'

It was as a prompter that Peggy was best known, at least to our actors, but hopefully not to the audiences. At this task she excelled. Helpful and sympathetic in rehearsals she could equally be a hard taskmaster for those of us she felt were not pulling their weight or keeping up with the word-learning schedule.

I'm not aware that she ever appeared on stage but she appears in our archives dozens of times, mostly as prompter, and continued to serve in this way until quite recently. It was not widely known that she was the regular 'shadow-marker' for the Welwyn Drama festival for many years (this involved marking each play just as the Adjudicator would so that if suddenly the Adjudicator was indisposed and unable to continue at the Festival continuity could be maintained). According to the Festival Committee her placings of the teams always bore a very close similarity to those given by the Adjudicator, a tribute to her appreciation of drama standards.

Her late daughter Debra acted and danced in our productions and her granddaughter Phaedra is also an active back-stage Member.

Never slow to offer an opinion, and a good companion and friend, Peggy was a valuable Member. We offer our sympathy to Celia and Phaedra.

Ruth Martin

Ruth, the wife of Ilay, our longest serving member, and mother of Hugh, died on 10th October. Ruth was a regular supporter of Barn productions and events for over fifty years. The funeral at Lemsford Church was attended by many Barn Members. We offer our sympathy to Ilay and Hugh in their sad loss.

Ilay Martin

Ilay Martin, who died on 4 November, aged 86, was closely involved with the Barn Theatre over a period of about 55 years, so he was well-known to several generations of Barn members and audiences: we remember him with affection as a kind person, and with respect as an actor with a magnificent voice, which he used to great effect. Our sympathy is with his son Hugh, in losing both his parents within a few weeks of each other.

Ilay was part of the local theatrical scene for so long that it is surprising to find that his appearances on the Barn stage were relatively few. He was, at the age of 19, in the Welwyn Theatre Society [predecessor of the Welwyn Drama Club] production of Shaw's "Misalliance" in February 1932, which was the first full-length play staged at the new Barn Theatre, and in the Society's next three productions, the last of which was "Henry IV, Part 1", in November 1933.

He next appeared at the Barn with the re-formed Welwyn Drama Club after the War, in 1947, and over the next five years acted in seven Barn productions (plus four as Front of House manager), as well as taking part in three Welwyn Drama Festivals. His work then made it difficult to be involved in full-length runs at the Barn, so he concentrated on Drama Festival productions, as well as making regular summer appearances at the open-air Minack Theatre in Cornwall, with the local groups the Interluders and the Hertfordshire Players. It was not until the 1980's that he was again, able to perform occasionally at the Barn. His final appearance was as 'Mr. Martin' (!) in 84 Charing Cross Road, in September 1986.

Arthur Lloyd

November also brought the death, at the age of 88, of Arthur Lloyd, another long-standing member of the Barn Theatre, and we extend our sympathy to his family. Arthur and his late wife Kathy came to this area in about 1949, and both soon became active with the Welwyn Folk Players. Kathy was made Wardrobe Mistress in 1950, and Arthur was a great support to her in her many years of involvement with theatre costumes. He also appeared on stage in numerous productions for the Folk Players and the Barn Theatre Club, between 1952 and 1986, as well as once with the Drama Club. From our records of Folk Players productions, we believe his first performance at the Barn was 'Telyegin' in "Uncle Vanya", in May 1952: his final appearance was as 'Carpet Seller/Priest' in "The Good Person of Szechwan", in October 1986. He and Kathy were also regular visitors to the Minack Theatre, with the Interluders and the Hertfordshire Players.

Many will remember Arthur as a good friend, and for the enthusiasm with which he followed his varied interests, from acting to the study of lichens. He was an expert photographer of many subjects, including theatrical productions, and his pictures of plays were used by the local press from time to time.

Ena Stokes

We are sad to learn of the death, on 12 December 1999, of Ena Stokes, at the age of 92.

Ena and her husband Stan (who died in 1982) joined the Welwyn Folk Players in about 1940, at a time when this was the only one of the main local drama groups able to remain active throughout the war.

In contrast to Stan — who was a prolific actor over many years, as well as chairman of the Folk Players from 1951 until it became part of the present Barn Theatre Club in 1969 — Ena's name appears only occasionally in the records, as actor, as responsible for costumes or props., or as membership secretary. She is remembered as a friendly, unassuming person who never sought the limelight, but was always working in the background to support Stan, and to help and advise others, especially new members of the club.

Ena was an accomplished artist - some may remember that she formerly worked with Agnes Boon at the Boon Gallery in the town centre - and used this talent in the theatre by making props., as well as teaching others how to do this. She remained an active audience member of the Barn Theatre Club until only a year ago.

(Keith Thompson)

Ron Thomas (I)

Ron Thomas died on 28th December. A personal appreciation by John Davies follows, so I will simply here record Ron's involvement with the Barn.

He first appeared in 'The Wizard of Oz' in 1975, a production in which his daughter Rachel played the leading role of Dorothy. Two years later, a small niche in theatre history — as Antonio in 'The Merchant of Venice' playing at the Hertford Festival on the Monday night, the very first performance at the New Castle Theatre, his voice was the first heard on stage at this new venue.

For over twenty years Ron played a wide variety of roles at the Barn, and his list of credits is impressive. These include Bob Cratchit, Crichton, being wonderfully cast against type as the ageing gay hairdresser Harry Leeds in 'Staircase', Sir Robert Morton in 'The Winslow Boy', Sir Lucius O' Trigger, Lt. Osborne in 'Journey's End', Major Pollock in 'Separate Tables', Sherlock Holmes, Canon Throbbing, and lastly, just two years ago, Arthur in 'The Railway Children.'

I remember his recent performance as Wisenhammer in 'Our Country's Good', portraying a man in whom the beauty and complexity of language inspired reverence, for this characteristic was essentially part of Ron. We will miss him.

(Keith Thompson)

Ron Thomas (II)

My first memory of Ron Thomas was in his role as part-time unpaid editor of Wall, a satirical wall newspaper that he compiled virtually single-handed when we worked together in the early '60s in St. Marylebone Public Library. It poked gentle fun at the management and at some of our more eccentric colleagues and clients, and was meticulously constructed from cuttings from Victorian and Edwardian illustrated magazines and newspapers, with added speech bubbles in the style subsequently adopted for the front page of Private Eye. Ron's well-developed sense of humour wasn't always immediately apparent to those who didn't know him well, because usually the only visible signs that he'd made one of his often rather donnish jokes were a lowering of the eyelids and the ghost of a smile around his lips, rather like a sapper waiting for a demolition charge to explode.

Later on, when we often competed to finish the Guardian crossword on the evening train from Kings Cross (I rarely won), or shared a dressing room at the Barn, I shared

his pleasure in constructing anagrams out of the names of fellow actors, and his particular delight when he hit on one that seemed to sum up the person in question.

Apart from his sense of humour, Ron's most striking qualities were his decency, idealism, honesty and gentleness. He was a lifelong socialist, but of a peculiarly British kind: his political beliefs owed little to Marx's economic analyses and ideas about the class struggle, and more to that tradition that one can trace back, via the Fabians, Chartists and Levellers, to the 14th century hedge-priest John Ball. Above all, his beliefs were founded on an unshakable commitment to equality, fairness and justice, and on a deep sense of duty to his fellows.

Ron was astonishingly widely read. He had an encyclopaedic knowledge of books, music and politics, as evidenced not just by his success in quizzes held at the Barn but also in Counterpoint, the Radio 4 music quiz. His judgement of a play or a novel was invariably interesting and individual; he wasn't one to adopt other peoples' opinions without first arguing them out for himself. If Ron told you something, you knew it was 50, and if he promised to do something, you could be sure it would be done. It was entirely typical of him that just a few weeks before he died, with his illness at an advanced stage, he struggled onto stage as Mr Brownlow in the Thaliens production of *Oliver*, and went straight home after the last performance, too exhausted to go to the last-night party.

Ron didn't talk about himself very much — it was only recently that he told me of the successes he had had as a singer at the St. Albans Festival, for example. A more surprising revelation came just ten days before he died, when I met another ex-colleague of ours who had known him even longer than I had, who told me that in his teens Ron had been a keen amateur boxer. At first I thought he was pulling my leg, for nothing could have seemed more incongruous to anyone who knew the gentle and pacifist Ron. Visiting him in hospital a couple of days later, I tackled him about it, and he admitted that it was true, but said that he'd given up the sport after losing eight bouts in a row. "I know how you must have felt," I sympathised, "I could never get much enjoyment from being bashed in the face by a fist-filled glove". Ron conceded that was indeed a significant disadvantage, but said that wasn't what had persuaded him to give it up: "I could never really bring myself to hurt my opponents" he said. Then he gave that slow chuckle of his: no-one was ever quicker than he to spot absurdities in others, but he reserved a particular amusement for the absurdities in himself.

The world could do with more people like Ron Thomas. I am sure that all at the Barn who knew him will share my sorrow at his passing, and join with me in extending our deepest sympathy to his daughter Rachel and son Nick, to his grandchildren, and to his devoted friend Claire Thompson.

(John Davies)

Brian Carman

We sadly record the death in March of Brian Carman. A leading player with the Club for a dozen years in the 70's and 80's, Brian's debut with us was in the Orton farce "What The Butler Saw" in 1975. Highlights of his performances here were as Guildenstern in 'R and G...' in 1976, Norman in 'Table Manners', the only part of the Ayckbourn trilogy we attempted, in 1979, Orsino in 'Twelfth Night' in 1980, a

selection of dignitaries in "The Elephant Man" 1985 and Angelo in 'Measure For Measure' 1986. His last appearance for us was as Mr. Emanuelli in "Once A Catholic" in 1987.

He had contributed some authorship to our local history revue, 'Hippo On The Doorstep' in 1980, and for Digswell Players he wrote and directed 'The End Of The Pier', a youth production which attracted a substantial grant from Arts For Everyone. Other appearances for Digswell included 'Running Riot' in 1996. Stage presence came easily to him, tall, dignified, and with the clipped tones of his immaculate voice. He preferred the classics, but all well-written parts appealed to him.

We send our condolences to his mother and family.

Katherine Rook

We sadly record the death on April 20th of Kate Rook, aged only 37. She played in two productions at the Barn, as Isabella in 'Measure For Measure' in 1986, and as Tillie in "The Effect Of Gamma-Rays On Man-In-The-Moon Marigolds" in 1987. Although clearly wanting to be more involved, ill-health prevented her from further active participation.

We send our condolences to her family.

SEASON 2000 – 2001

Ralph Then-Bergh

Members, especially those 'oldies: among us, like me, will have been saddened to hear of the death of Ralph Then-Bergh on 24th June at the ripe old age of 93. Looking back in the records of the Barn Theatre Club, which only began in 1969 when Ralph was already 61, there are several references to the many small parts he played in productions up to 1977, in which year he made special props for The Merchant of Venice. Going back still further to the records of the old Welwyn Drama Club and the Welwyn Folk Players, he played many smallish roles between 1961 (in Roots) to 1969 in (Hotel Paradiso). During that time he served on the committee of the Drama Club, did Front-of-House management and made and did the signwriting for the notice board outside the theatre as well as numbering all the auditorium seats. His most notable role was in the part of the delivery man in Barefoot In the Park in 1971. This called for the character to have climbed the many flights of stairs to reach the top apartment and is too exhausted to get any words out - Ralph did this to perfection, so much so that one night a member of the audience exclaimed "Its terrible! That poor old man shouldn't be asked to do that part, he can't speak!" Another fond memory was in Maria Marten, one of the early joint productions the Drama Club did with the Folk Players prior to the formation of the Barn Theatre Club. Ralph was working backstage and we had not got much in the way of stage effects in those days. A steam train was required to cross right across the back of the stage. Ralph achieved this by crawling along the upstage trap in the floor, out of sight, puffing a pipe furiously and blowing smoke and sparks into the air. Actually, it was

very effective until one night when he accidentally blew a perfect smoke ring which caused a lot of laughter at just the wrong moment!

Of recent years, unable to participate in the Rambling Society's activities which he and Marjorie used to enjoy, he ran the Music Club and helped with the monthly Video Club at Woodside House, so remaining active to the end of a wonderful innings.

We extend our deep sympathy to Marjorie and their sons Christopher, Simon and Richard.

(Louis Davis)

Joan Rees

We sadly record the death on 4th July of Joan Rees. At the time of her involvement at the Barn from 1965 to 1969 she was better known to us as Joan Forrester.

A talented actress, she also played for HD&OS and CoPs in Hertford, and was Portia in the first Interluders production at the Minack Theatre in 1964. At the Barn she appeared first in A Letter From the General and then in four other productions, including the Welwyn Festival entry in 1967.

Paul Mulrennan

At the turn of the year, we heard the sad news of Paul's death, in tragic circumstances, at his parent's home in Ireland.

Our first record of Paul at the Barn is in A View From the Bridge in 1978, and he played leading roles in Twelfth Night and One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest in 1980. He directed Abigail's Party in 1984 and at that time also played a memorable Nicholas Nickleby for the Hertfordshire Players at the Minack Theatre.

In 1990 he was Eilert Lovberg in Hedda Gabler, one of Michael McArdle's outstanding studio productions, but he will be especially remembered for his performances as Mozart in Amadeus and as Macbeth.

We offer our condolences to his family and friends.

Stella Taylor

Many of our older members, especially supporters of the Welwyn Drama Festival, will remember Stella Taylor with affection and be saddened to learn that she died on 20th February, peacefully at the Lister Hospital, after a short illness.

Stella worked backstage at the Welwyn Drama Festival for many years, becoming ASM in 1961 under the then Stage Director, Charles Pilgrem. She became Stage Manager in 1962 and continued in this role until 1972 and 'retired' to become ASM again until she really retired in 1973. She appears in the programme of the old Welwyn Drama Club as projectionist for the slides used in their production of Oh, What a Lovely War! which opened on 11th November 1968, the 50th anniversary of the signing of the armistice of World War 1. She served on the first Council of the newly formed Barn Theatre Club from 1969 to 1971. But her real forte was in Stage Management and she served in that capacity for the Club's first production, Fings Ain't Wot They Used T'Be, directed by the late Mervyn Lloyd, in 1969. She stage managed several more productions up to 1976 when she hung up her headphones for the last time.

Many of you will also remember Festival Workshop, a small company which she and Charles Pilgrem founded, operating a hire service for stage lighting equipment and rostra, which they built themselves, for amateur drama groups. This was run from a small area in the Barn within what is now the furniture store and was their workshop, stockroom and office!

Stella was a first-class Stage Manager and a lovely person who endeared herself to everyone with whom she came into contact. She will be much missed and we extend our heartfelt sympathy to her daughter Bridget, son John and all members of the family.

Fred Faulkner

Fred Faulkner died on 20th April after a long illness borne with patience and bravery. He and Hedy joined the Barn in the late 1960s when they moved out to the Garden City from their previous home in Muswell Hill. Fred always gave the impression that he was comfortable at the Barn, enjoying the ambience and the many friends he made. He also supported Hedy in her involvement in productions. A quiet and unassuming man, with a deft sense of humour, Fred's contribution was a number of years of skilled application to the running of the Bar, as Bar Chairman and on the Committee.

He will be missed by his many friends, and we offer our condolences to Hedy.

Joe Eddlestone

We sadly record the recent death of Joe, Les's father, who was a regular supporter of the Barn and well known to many of our members. Our condolences are offered to all the family.

John Crozier

We heard last month of the death in Andorra, where he had lived for many years, of John Crozier. An actor and director, John was a founder member of the Company of Players, Hertford, in 1962, and also the first Company Secretary of the Barn Theatre Club on its formation in 1969.

SEASON 2001 – 2002

Marjorie Then-Bergh

We sadly record the recent death of Marjorie Then-Bergh. Club records show that she first played for the Folk Players in 1959 as Third Lady in *The Chalk Garden*; for the Welwyn Drama Club first in 1960 in Roy Brewer's production of *Mr Kettle and Mrs Moon* and she played Rebecca Nurse in Hugh Croydon's memorable version of *The Crucible* for the Welwyn Folk Players in the mid-'60s.

An imposing figure, Marjorie was well cast as a policewoman in the Barn Theatre Club's inaugural *Fings Ain't Wot They Used T'be* in 1969 but her appearances on stage were much less frequent than her involvement as prompter, production assistant or house manager, and throughout the '70s her name appears very regularly in the records of our plays, and she also played on more than one occasion

in the Barn Theatre Club entry for the Welwyn Drama Festival.

Marjorie was responsible for organising play-readings for a while, and was an outspoken upholder of the standards and traditions of the Barn. My favourite memory of her was when she prompted for Oh, What A Lovely War! in 1968. During the dress rehearsal she was 'set up' by Rodney Bowen, who deliberately failed to come in with his required soldierly oath, so Marjorie supplied the prompt in a louder than necessary voice, and an enormous smile, aware of the trick: she fixed Rodney in her gaze and said "Bollocks!".

Her last formal involvement was with The Children's Hour in 1983 but she supported our productions regularly until recently.

Peter Thomas

We were sad to hear of the recent death of Peter, who acted with the Club during the '70s and '80s, mostly in our productions of Shakespeare, performing as the Duke of Venice in The Merchant...in 1977 and also in Twelfth Night, The Winter's Tale, The Taming of the Shrew and The Tempest. He had also appeared in Close the Coalhouse Door (1975) and The Canterbury Tales (1988), but his only other venture away from the classics was in the musical melodrama Oh, Glorious Jubilee! in 1977, when he played a villain, Hans Schneider. This Teutonic diversion might have been the result of his interest and ability in languages, which was considerable.

It also reminds me of a moment when we were striking a set at a Sunday morning de-rig, and a small group of us, including Peter, were sullenly pulling nails out of bits of wood and having to decide if they were straight enough to be used again. Peter brightened us up by putting the whole thing in perspective when he said, "The last time I did this was in the ruins of Berlin in 1945, as a Prisoner of War".

More recently Peter had spent his time with Digswell Players, and I last saw him there in May doing front-of-house duties with his usual warm and cheerful smile.

Pat Walsh

There were many old friends and faces who gathered to say "goodbye" and apart from the family, all of us from the world of 'am-dram'.

Once bitten, Pat became involved in so many productions either as a member of the Barn Theatre Club, the ICI Drama Club or the Hertfordshire Players as well as being a member of the Welwyn Festival and Youth Drama Festival teams.

Her own scrapbook opens with a programme from the 1976 ICI production of The Caretaker which she attended as an audience member, but thereafter all the other programmes she collected mentioned her somewhere, either as 'crowd, a village girl, a woman, props, prompt, costume, stage-crew, stage-management or production secretary' though she actually played Antoinette Plucheux in Feydeau's A Flea In Her Ear where she spent most of the time being chased around the stage whilst wearing a corset and frilly knickers - well, you know what French farces are like!

That was in October 1977 and was her first 'on-stage' appearance. Just before that, in February, she had been one of the ASMs for the Barn's Put That Light Out which would have kept her busy, but her earliest dramatic mention was in the ICI Plastics News as a refreshment lady, out front, in full Victorian costume for Hobson's Choice in 1975. Her first expedition to the Minack Cliffside Theatre in Cornwall came in 1978 with The Canterbury Tales where in The Nun's Priest's Tale she played a hen!

Many of you will doubtless have your own particular dramatic memories - one of her friends told me that what they remembered most was that she could be such fun and was always a pleasure to work beside. Her daughters confirm that she had a wicked sense of humour and that despite her often-demure manner she had an infectious and somewhat 'dirty' laugh! Her wide interests, desire to learn, bright and friendly smile, rather belied years of adversity and downright struggle. As a toddler, Pat left Ireland and came to London with her mother who then fell ill, which necessitated Pat being placed in an orphanage and then evacuated to Wales during the war. She always regarded this as home and the couple who took her in became her devoted parents in all but name.

She spent some years in the RAF and then settled in Hatfield, joining ICI in the early '70s. Finding herself alone following her divorce, she set about the task of seeing her two daughters through their teenage years - the elder, Molly, as far as a degree and the younger, Wendy, who had followed in her mother's footsteps and joined the RAF.

Pat was the epitome of someone who really did learn lessons from all her experiences, good or bad, spreading her caring nature far and wide – as a prime mover in the RAF Benevolent Fund Organisation and as a collector for whatever flag was having a 'day'.

She was rewarded with a joy she deserved on tracing and discovering that she had a brother and three half-brothers, all of whom were delighted to know her and thereafter contrived to keep in touch.

Not even being yelled at for being late on cue because she had allowed Cornish snails to eat her script as she perched precariously on a rock, or being conned into soaping the heads of thousands of tiny tacks that were holding down stage carpets, so that they wouldn't reflect the lights could diminish her stature or convince me that she was a dope at heart!

Wherever she was destined to go, I hope no-one was waiting with a gooey bar of soap because she would, almost certainly, have told them what they could do with it! "Way to go, Walshy"

(Carol Muscroft)

Marguerite Whiston

We have just heard of the recent death of Marguerite. With her passes a part of the early history of drama in the town.

Marguerite joined the Welwyn Folk Players in 1928 and we are told that she played in the first Welwyn Drama Festival, adjudicated by Miles Malleson, in July 1929. You may recall that at the last night of A Christmas Carol a few weeks ago, Chairman John Davies announced that it was the exact 70th anniversary of the first recorded performance at the Barn Theatre. Marguerite was involved in this production, which took place on 5th January 1932. Soon after this she played the lead in the first full length play performed here, Misalliance, with The Theatre Society (fore-runner of Welwyn Drama Club), opposite the late lay Martin.

Our archives for the Welwyn Drama Club first record her as playing in a play titled Nine Till Six in January 1935 and making several other appearances up to She Stoops To Conquer in April 1939. In this production Gordon Whiston also appeared. In April 1940, Marguerite Whiston - as she now was - appeared in the last play at the Barn

before the closure for the duration of the war. When drama resumed in January 1947 Marguerite was Treasurer of the Drama Club and did box office for the first production, Priestley's I Have Been Here Before. Her last stage appearance was in the 1958 Drama Festival entry, Mervyn Lloyd's production of The Ass and the Philosophers, in which also appeared Louis Davis, Bernadine Stoye (now Palomeque), and Anne Woolmington's late father, Wilf Taylor.

I only met Marguerite at the Barn's Golden Jubilee reception at Campus West in January 1982. Although I did not know her, like anyone who has an interest in the history of drama in this town I knew of her. A constant reminder of her for us all is the brass Ship's Clock in the foyer of the theatre, which she donated in memory of her husband Gordon.

We offer our sympathy to her relatives and old friends.

(Keith Thompson)

Vi Jolly

We were sad to hear of the death in early April of Vi, widow of the late Ron, whose association with our theatre began in 1947 with the Welwyn Drama Club. Vi supported everything that Ron was involved in at the Barn, including his period as Vice-Chairman which commenced in 1976. After Ron's death, Vi continued to see nearly every production until March this year.

Our condolences are offered to Tina, Martyn and Nigel.

Anne Butterworth

We have only just had news of the death of Anne Butterworth. In more recent years Anne had specialized in make-up very professionally, but as an actress she appears in our archives first in 1970 in When We Are Married for which her rich Pennine accent would have been most suitable as Lottie Grady.

Her relatives have donated her extensive make-up kit to the Barn, for which we are most grateful.

Quentin Openshaw

Quentin joined the Barn in the early 1970s and made his mark as a stage manager and set constructor. In 1974 in conjunction with his friend Tony Wagstaff he became Joint Stage Director of the Club for a year, and continued to be involved back-stage until the end of the decade. We have just heard of his death at a relatively young age, and we offer our condolences to his friends and relatives.

Gloria Moseley

Gloria died on May 23rd at the Isobel Hospice. We had all known about her illness for over a year, and continued to be amazed and grateful that she was able to turn up at the Barn on so many occasions during that period, and be such good company despite the effects of her treatment.

Gloria's first involvement was with the Club in its very first season after amalgamation, on the crew of Gigi, and she was regularly doing stage management or props, her particular taste for the light-hearted being revealed by some examples of her choice of plays to crew – Habeas Corpus, (1980 version), The Odd Couple, The Golden Pathway Annual and The Fosdyke Saga (1983). In this last she made her only

acting appearance, paired with Val Turner as the bunny girls who sold tripe in the audience, which caused Derrick Baldock, the reviewer from the Welwyn Times to try to escape the auditorium lest he be the obvious target for their 'wares'!

For those of us who enjoyed her company at the Barn, it seemed that to Gloria life was essentially a lot of fun. Always attending social events, joking and laughing with her friends, and the possessor of an identifiable laugh which was always a source of satisfaction to those on stage when performing comedy: "Gloria's in", we would happily acknowledge when we heard it. She would also discuss the Club's more serious output with frankness and perception.

Whatever memories we have of her time at the Barn, these will all have to stand against the most recent, when, knowing that her illness was serious, she still regularly came to the Barn and was an absolute inspiration to all of us with a cheerful acceptance and a radiating love for life and friends that is unforgettable.

We offer our condolences to Brian and the family, and we know how much they supported Gloria through a long and difficult illness. Brian has asked me to thank so many of you who helped in so many ways during the last year or so, and have helped him since the end of May.

(Keith Thompson)

Stanley Meyrick

'Til', as he was known to all his friends at the Barn, died at the Llandough Hospital in Cardiff on 23rd May.

His first appearance at the Barn Theatre was in Bernard Shaw's *You Never Can Tell* in April 1951, a Welwyn Drama Club production. He became Secretary of the Welwyn Drama Club in 1954, and was in Mervyn Lloyd's production of Noël Coward's *Red Peppers* which won the Welwyn Drama Festival in 1959. Amongst many roles in 1960 he played Major Pollock in Terence Rattigan's *Separate Tables*, and after the formation of the Barn Theatre Club in 1969 he was cast as Sir Oblong FitzOblong, the incompetent knight suffering a crisis of confidence in *The Thwarting of Baron Bolligrew* at Christmas, 1970. Other roles were played in such varied performances as *Shaw's Widowers' Houses* and the musical *Cabaret*, and Dr Bradman in *Blithe Spirit*.

He was elected Vice-Chairman of the Club from 1981 to 1983, and also served as Chairman of the Publicity committee for nine years.

He only rarely ventured into directing, but was a regular actor with the Club, his last performance being in *The Happiest Days Of Your Life* in 1987, in which he and his wife Vaughan (a winner of the Winifred Butler Award for Best Actress at the Welwyn Drama Festival in 1980) were happily paired as elderly schoolteachers.

They retired to Cardiff to be near their family.

A gentleman of 'the old school' Til was a Stickler for the good use of the English language, and his tastes in drama always veered towards the classical. We offer our condolences to Vaughan and the family.

(Keith Thompson)

SEASON 2002 – 2003

Louis Driscoll

Louis, who died on the 15th August, aged 89, came to Welwyn Garden City in 1935 to work at Murphy Radio after studying engineering at Nottingham University.

Louis was a member of the Folk Players and was involved in stage lighting and at least one acting part as Timothy Wadlow in Hobson's Choice in 1946. He was also active in the Film Society, which used the Barn before the College or Campus West became available, the Concert Club and the Garden City Society. Louis and Molly became loyal audience members of the Barn Theatre Club with Louis making a further stage appearance as Grandfather in The Good Person of Szechuan in 1986. They celebrated 62 years of marriage this year.

We send condolences to Molly and to their son Richard and daughter Judith.

John Ball

We have recently heard of the death of John Ball in Canada where he had lived for many years since leaving Welwyn Garden City.

His first involvement at the Barn was doing sound for the 1968 joint Drama Club and Folk Players production of Oh, What a Lovely War! Soon after, he designed and installed new cueing and emergency lighting systems, and did Sound for many other plays, his last being the 1974 Blithe Spirit. He was joint donor of the Ball-England Cup for Technical Achievement at the Welwyn Youth Drama Festival.

We send our condolences to his family.

Ken Coppock

Ken Coppock died on 4th April.

Originally from Manchester, he had lived and worked all over the world and came with his wife, Kay, and his family to the Garden City in the 1970s. Kay was involved first at the Barn (props for Rookery Nook in 1976) but by the following year Ken had been persuaded to make an 18th-century cricket bat for Michael McArdle's production of Penny for a Song.

Within two years he had been elected Stage Director for the Club, and stage managed and built sets for many of our productions over the next dozen or so years. He was subsequently elected Technical Director in 1981 and held the post for a full term of five years, and throughout these periods was often Stage Manager to many of our festival touring plays. He served as Licensee from 1990 to 1995.

On his first visit to the Barn, he asked the lady cleaning the loos who she was. "I'm the Chairman's wife" she replied; after he had joined the Barn he remarked "Any organization where the Chairman's wife cleans the loos is worth joining." Ken was a quiet man, but with a delightful sense of humour, and when we worked together he always gave the impression, with that lovely smile of his, that he wasn't really sure how he had come to be mixed up with this strange crowd of amdram folk.

Also, having worked all over the world for the MoD, and not being very forthcoming about it, rumours developed, which with a smile he would listen to but never repudiate, that he had been something of a James Bond.

The service of Celebration and Remembrance at Knebworth on 17th April was attended by some 60 people of whom nearly half were his friends from the Barn. The Celebrant read a biographical account of Ken's life which was fascinating to those of us who had only known him in his retirement. There were readings by his daughter, Fiona, his son Simon and his nephew John.

The introductory music was Mendelssohn's 'Scottish' Symphony to remind us of his love for the out-door life and especially that country, and after the hymn To Be a Pilgrim the congregation exited to the distinctly Caribbean tempo of My Heart Belongs To Daddy.

Ken was a quiet gentleman, highly capable and efficient in all the roles he chose, whose company was enjoyed by all who had the very real pleasure of working with him. We shall miss him. Our condolences are offered to Kay and the family.

(Keith Thompson)

Michael McArdle

On 7th May the Church of the Holy Family, where he had been a member of the congregation, was nearly full for the funeral and Mass for Michael McArdle, who died on 23rd April, at the age of 82. The Barn was well represented together with his friends and colleagues from many other organizations.

Three short addresses were given, by his niece, an ICI colleague and Brian Kent, who spoke of Michael's involvement with the Barn and U3A. Those of us who knew him only at the Barn learned that he had been born into an Irish mining family in Durham, and after war service with the Royal Signals moved to London and then to Welwyn with ICI. For those of us who wondered why a man of such talent and dominating stage presence only appeared in fourteen productions in 30 years since the Barn Theatre Club was formed in 1969, we discovered that as well as drama, Michael was a sculptor and artist, a leading member of the local French and Italian language societies, worked at the Citizens' Advice Bureau specializing in housing advice, and devoted a great deal of time to U3A.

He was a founder member of the ICI Dramatic Society, and from 1949 to 1958 inclusive (with the exception of 1951 when he played for the Welwyn Drama Club) he acted or directed at the Welwyn Drama Festival for ICI. His last involvement at the Festival was his production of *The Eccentric* in 1969, which was the last ever play performed by the Welwyn Drama Club before the amalgamation. For ICI he had directed *The Little Foxes* and sung in a revue called *Modest Little Epic*. He had also been a member of the Folk Players since 1949, and in less politically correct times (1966) had played for them a memorable *Othello*, unashamedly but very accurately based on Olivier's triumphant performance. In May 1960 he had directed *People of Nowhere* at St Francis Church, using members of many local groups, as a special event in aid of World Refugee Year.

In his too few appearances for the Barn Theatre Club he had played Preacher Haggler in *Dark of the Moon*, King Lear in 1974, Judge Brack in *Hedda Gabler* and Badger in the 1977 *Toad of Toad Hall*. It was in this production that Michael, the consummate actor, lost his composure - the only time - when playing to a matinée for which the whole audience was a childrens' outing who had all been given a packet of crisps each in the interval. When the Act Two curtain went up and he was faced with a wall of sound not unlike a forest fire he clearly wanted to leave the stage, and was

persuaded otherwise by the rest of the cast. He directed Trelawny of the Wells in our first season, and also Penny For a Song, The Aspern Papers and Travesties, among others. He was at the forefront of our development of studio theatre with Ghosts, A Doll's House and Hedda Gabler in 1988, '89 and '90.

Our most recent memory of Michael is his reading about the Irish way of making a Christmas pudding at our Christmas Supper last year, and bringing roars of laughter from the audience. But that is one small memory from half a lifetime of outstanding performances. We shall miss him.

(Keith Thompson & Denys Wells)

Bill Rodway

For those of us who are asked to write obituaries for Barn News there is a wealth of archival information in Harry Stull's four volumes of Barn Theatre Club history. They do however only refer to the productions and those taking part as cast or crew, and to the Club's policies and administration.

Bill's name does not appear in the records covering those thirty-odd years and yet he was one of the best known faces at the theatre, regularly doing duty as Front of House Manager, and in recent years writing, organising and performing in a series of Club Nights, each of which was themed (Pomp and Circumstance, Love and Marriage) and brilliantly researched for items which were both humorous and fascinating.

The funeral at Knebworth was attended by well over 100 friends of Bill and Maryam's, and many of those gathered had to stand through the Humanist celebration of Bill's life. We learned that Bill had studied Classics at university, but later switched to Chemistry via an evening course, on which he met Maryam. Joining ICI, he moved to the Garden City in the late 1950s and after his retirement was appointed to the Government body NEDO, and did consultancy work. He and Maryam had travelled widely all over the world, and I can personally vouch for their enthusiasm in helping others choose where to visit - not in the sense of 'been there, done that' but with a vibrant interest in archaeology and history.

Bill's son, Richard, spoke of their — family life and how he, as a child, believed that his father "knew everything", and could answer any question posed. Certainly for those of us who knew Bill at the Barn, the fusion of classics and science made him a fascinating and knowledgeable friend (and a great researcher for his Club nights). His friendship was given instantly, quietly, and with no demands, a man whose company was always a pleasure.

Dennis Barr spoke of his lifelong association with Bill at ICI, and Louis Davis spoke on behalf of the family of Bill's pride and happiness with Maryam, Richard, Diana and Madison. Bill had supported Maryam in her performances at the Barn, at the Minack Theatre in Cornwall on many occasions, and for sixteen years in the touring music hall company The Barnstormers, at one of whose one-night stands he had made his only known stage appearance in this area, pressed into service and revealing his fine singing voice whilst being steered around the stage in a dance routine he had seen many times but never thought he would have to join in.

Bill gave a great deal of time and affection to the Barn, and we will miss him. We offer our condolences to Maryam and the family.

(Keith Thompson)

Vaughan Meyrick

We have just heard that Vaughan Meyrick died on 7th June at the age of 93, just one year and one week after the death of her husband Stanley (Til). They had moved to Cardiff in 1996 to be nearer to their family.

Our records show that her first appearance at the Barn was as Mrs Corcoran in the 1953 production of Dr Angelus, and soon after she served a brief spell as Secretary of the Welwyn Drama Club. She made regular appearances in Drama Club plays and her first appearance at the Welwyn Drama Festival was in 1957. Among her highlights were Mervyn Lloyd's Present Laughter in 1958, her Lady Matheson in Mervyn's Separate Tables in 1960, and Eric Farlie's Summer of the Seventeenth Doll in 1968.

For the Barn Theatre Club her first performance was as The Storyteller in Keith Thompson and Freddie Butler's production of The Thwarting of Baron Bolligrew in 1970, for which her beautiful speaking voice was perfect. Often cast as second-lead elegant ladies she also ventured into comedy - her first Barn festival part was as Miss Furnival in Black Comedy in 1972 and - the more bizarre - Conjure Woman in Orpheus Descending in 1974. In 1980 she was awarded the Welwyn Medal as Best Actress at the Welwyn Drama Festival for her performance as Bella in Man Without A Name, directed by George Blee. She made many appearances in programmes as prompter, stage manager, front of house and properties, as well as painting fake Impressionists for Caught Gauguin, Bowled Cezanne. She also played piano for one production, and was an accomplished harpist, although we are not aware that this talent was ever used on the Barn stage; her last performance at the Barn was as Madame de Rosemonde in Les Liaisons Dangereuses in March 1995, and her last involvement in a play was as prompter for The Wolf in 1996.

A slight, elegant woman of determinedly traditional standards of dress and behaviour, frequently cast as an elegant Englishwoman, she was nonetheless witty and enjoyed the backstage badinage, which she punctuated with a whooping laugh and feigned surprise at the antics of her younger colleagues. We send our condolences to her family.

(Keith Thompson)

Julia Gosling

We learned via a recent article in the Welwyn Hatfield Times of the death earlier this year of Julia Gosling. She was a member of the Welwyn Drama Club in the 1960s and will be remembered by some of our older members. She did props for a couple of productions, including their 1961 entry in the Welwyn Drama Festival, and also in Freddie Butler's 1966 production of The Italian Straw Hat which was one of the joint efforts by the Drama Club and the Welwyn Folk Players which led three years later to the amalgamation and the formation of the Barn Theatre Club. For the newly formed Club Julia appeared just once in the records as hairdresser for Hugh Croydon's 1970 Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf.

She was the daughter of the first Chairman of the Welwyn Garden Development Corporation, Mr R.Gosling, after whom the Gosling Stadium was named.

(Keith Thompson)

SEASON 2003 – 2004

Gerry Woolmington

On 7th November St Francis's Church was filled to overflowing for the funeral of Gerry Woolmington. The service was conducted by the Reverend Peter Louis who spoke affectionately of his friend Gerry and the address was given by Dr Denis Lewis, a friend of the family for over forty years. Denis revealed that Gerry had been an RAF navigator flying in V-bombers when he and Anne had married, and had at other times been in the office equipment business and had later opened a ship's chandler's store for a while, which reflected his expertise as a sailor, also being elected Commodore at Graffham Water.

In more recent years he had taken to building and flying (and crashing, according to Dennis) radio-controlled model planes. Rugby was another of his passions, and he was a regular at Twickenham. Gerry was also an accomplished cook, and a bon viveur, serving and sharing good wines and dispensing great hospitality.

Dennis, who is of course well known for his political involvement locally, admitted he had never quite been able to determine Gerry's political affiliations, or direct them, despite many evenings of chatting over a drink or two. Indeed, to those of us who encountered Gerry at the Barn, it is as a dispenser of drinks and friendly advice and opinion over the bar that he will best be remembered, as well as for his unfailing support of Anne in her on-stage revels, and his support for many other productions as well. This aspect of his character, love of a good conversation, was clearly revealed by the warm respect held for him by his daughters' partners and friends, who enjoyed his advice and friendship, and who formed a substantial part of the congregation.

The service ended with Kiri Te Kanawa's inspiring recording of the Rugby World Cup anthem, The World In Union, as the congregation departed. I can't help feeling that Gerry's gruff voice is imparting a vigorous new enthusiasm to a celestial rendition of Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.

We offer our condolences to Anne, to their daughters Kate and Tiffany and their partners and children.

(Keith Thompson)

Molly Driscoll

We were sad to learn of the recent death of Molly Driscoll: like her late husband Louis she was a long-standing supporter, since at least the 1940s, of first The Welwyn Folk Players, and later the Barn Theatre Club.

Until very recently she regularly came to see most productions at the Barn, and was also involved with 'props', and did some prompting, for the Folk Players in the 1950s and 1960s. Although increasing infirmity eventually made it more difficult for her to get to the theatre, this did not deter her, and she was lately very grateful to her Barn friends who brought her to see the public Dress Rehearsal, until well into this season. Molly was also a regular attender at the Welwyn Drama Festival for many years.

We send our condolences to her son Richard (who did stage lighting for the Folk Players, and for the Barn Theatre club in its early years) and her daughter Judith.

(Denys Wells)

Gerry Scrimshire

We reported Gerry's death on April 22nd in the last issue. We remember Gerry in recent years setting high standards as a front of house manager, his impeccable appearance and firm presence, probably a reminder of his earlier days as a Sergeant-Major in the Army, admirably suited to the role. He had been employed by ICI and later Ramblers Holidays Limited, before his retirement.

A great cricket fan, Gerry had played in the Army, and was a supporter of Kent C.C.C. He was also very keen on quizzes and crosswords, and was one of a small group who regularly tackled these in a team effort in the bar on Sundays.

At the Barn Gerry was a regular barman, usually with his friend Dave Davis, who gave him valuable support during his last year or so of incapacity, continuing to bring Gerry to events at the Barn. Gerry was widowed some years ago, but has a daughter, and it is to her and his close friends at the Barn that we offer our condolences.

(Keith Thompson)

SEASON 2004 – 2005

Jack Bradley

Jack Bradley died on July 14th. We are not aware that he ever took an active part in the Club's affairs, but for many years he and his wife Dawn were regular members of our main-house audiences, together with a group of their friends. A reserved gentleman of the 'old school', Jack was always very appreciative when discussing his views of the Barn's productions. Because of his declining health Jack had not been to the Barn for over a year.

We offer our condolences to Dawn and their sons Charles and James, and their families.

Joan Parsons

Most of us will not have seen Joan for several years, as she went into residential care due to failing health.

Her first appearance on a Barn programme was as property mistress for Joan Goodwin's production of 'A Taste of Honey' in 1976. In 1978 she was doing box office for the first time, and she was to become the manager of our box office, though still continuing to do props. She was elected to the Club Council in 1981, and served for five years, and in her second year on Council took over the responsibility for the printing and distribution of Barn News.

In 1976 and 1977 her daughter, Helen, played in Jack and the Beanstalk and Toad of Toad Hall and in 1979 her son, Neil, did lighting and sound in three productions.

Joan organised the Theatregoers Club theatre trips for several years and many of us will remember the efficiency of the trips and her excellent qualities as hostess, ensuring that all who went were made welcome. In addition she specialised in flower arranging, both at the Barn for foyer display and at the Welwyn Festival.

The funeral was held on July 26th, delayed until Helen could come home from her work in Africa. Joan was a cheerful and willing volunteer with a great deal of expertise which she willingly donated to the Club. We offer our condolences to Helen and Neil.

John Goodwin MBE

John Goodwin died on Friday October 29th. He first appears in the Barn Theatre Club's records as one of the set builders for his wife's production of Barefoot in the Park, in February 1971. Indeed, his entire involvement with our productions over the years was as the principal set builder for Joan's productions, sometimes on his own and sometimes as the leader of a team. As many of these plays travelled to festivals, the sets required a degree of expertise in design, and a corresponding input of manpower to rig them for just one performance in far-flung locations.

The sets John built were always of the highest standard, to match Joan's personal standards for the production. Apart from this work, John was a regular supporter of many of the Club's plays. We would have liked to have seen more of him, but golf beckoned for both him and Joan.

We often wondered, as he had a distinguished baritone speaking voice, if he ever had appeared on any stage, or ever would appear on our stage, but it was not to be. The early stages of his last illness coincided with Joan's recent play, the first of our season, and we are grateful that Joan was able to continue with the play, and hope that this preoccupation and busy time with her friends at the Barn in some way helped her.

Our deepest sympathy is extended to Joan, their son Adam and their family.

(Keith Thompson)

Harry Petschek

Harry Petschek died in March after a long illness.

Although a member of the Barn for many years he was almost unknown to most of our members, as he lived in New England with his wife Mary, one of the daughters of Roy Brewer (a founder member of this theatre in 1932). She is Anne Davis's and Janet Aspey's sister, hence Louis's sister-in-law.

Born in Prague Harry went to the US with the family in 1938. After studying physics at Cornell he had a distinguished career in aerospace and later medical applications of physics and was one of the designers of the intra-aorta balloon, a device for treating heart failure.

He was author of over 50 scientific publications, and his pioneering work in the civil rights movement, masterminding a racial discrimination test case, was described in a Pulitzer Prize winning book, Common Ground.

We send our condolences to Mary, and her four children and eleven grandchildren.

(Keith Thompson)

Harold Jennings

Harold Jennings died suddenly in the town centre on Thursday May 12th. We were all very used to seeing him around the town with his guide dog, confidently striding to his next appointment on the piano tuning circuit.

He always seemed to enjoy his social visits to the bar where he was an entertaining companion. He also managed to work on productions — he first did sound for The Winter's Tale in 1979, and repeated this role in 14 other productions up to 1987. If

Harold was doing sound this placed a discipline on the actors — as he was totally reliant on listening to the dialogue for his cues absolute accuracy was essential.

He often attended shows as an audience member, usually asking for a brief synopsis of the play from the director beforehand. In the auditorium he was always accompanied by his dog — his first one, Ivor, snored very loudly for a moment or two (until Harold kicked him) which mystified those on stage at the time, and the Club's archives record that 'Ivor is affectionately remembered for a well-timed snort during the AGM, which admirably expressed the feeling of the meeting at that moment.'

Harold was also a lifelong friend of the internationally famous jazz pianist Eddie Thompson, and when Eddie played a concert at Campus West a select group of us had a private performance in the bar afterwards, with lots of reminiscences and much laughter and music between Harold and Eddie.

Always companionable and a contributor to any discussion on how we should run our theatre, Harold was a well known and well-loved member of the Club. We send our deepest sympathy to Norma.

Peter Norfolk

Peter died on 9th June from a recurrence of an old illness. A regular supporter of most of the Barn productions, he was a genial and knowledgeable audience member.

As a highly successful finance manager he did not have a great deal of time to spend on the Club's business, although he served on the Council from 1987 to 1989. A Finance Director of Thorn EMI, he was able to offer us assistance in dealing with Strand Electric, suppliers of stage lighting equipment, one of their subsidiaries.

He and Joyce were generous hosts to many of us in their beautiful house in Bulls Green. His cheerful greetings and good companionship will be missed.

We send our condolences to Joyce.

(Keith Thompson)

Gladys Lloyd

We have recently heard of the death of Gladys Lloyd at the age of 95. Gladys was the second wife of Dr. Vivien Lloyd, the first head of the Campus College and was the stepmother of the late Mervyn Lloyd, one of our best-known directors until his death in 1988.

Gladys and Vivien were long time supporters of the Barn Theatre and lived at the Old Cottage in Bridge Road. After suffering several strokes Gladys moved to a residential nursing home in Havant. Her funeral was held in Welwyn Garden City.

SEASON 2005 – 2006

Jacqueline Secker

We heard last week of the death of Jacqueline Secker at her home in France on October 12th. She had joined the newly formed Company of Players (CoPs) in Hertford in 1962 and her first appearance in the archives of the Barn is in the cast of *A Clean Kill* in 1963, directed by Bernardine Stoye. In 1964, as Social Secretary of the

Welwyn Drama Club she organised theatre outings, and was helping backstage. She next appeared on-stage in *The Little Hut* in 1965 and the following year directed the Drama Club's entry for the Youth Festival, coming second. She played Abigail in the Folk Players production of *The Crucible* and Desdemona in *Othello*, both directed by Hugh Croydon. Her last appearance on stage at the Barn was in the CoPs production of *Romeo and Juliet* which played here in 1968.

From 1963 she was deeply involved with her husband Derek in setting up The Interluders, a new group whose *raison d'être* was to play at the Minack Theatre in Cornwall, and apart from playing Jessica in their first production *The Merchant of Venice* in 1964 she was responsible for much of the administration of the new 'travelling' company. Also, thanks to her the rehearsals for the open-air productions were held in the garden of her parents' home, Amores in Hertingfordbury, where they continue to this day.

A warm and lively personality and a very striking actress, Jacquie had lived for many years in Andorra and France, thus depriving us of her company and talent.

We send our deepest sympathy to her husband Brian, her former husband Derek, her daughter Samantha and brother Jeremy, both of whom have played at the Barn, and to her many friends who will remember her with great affection.

(Keith Thompson)

Joy Mellor(I)

Joy Mellor died in June 2005. We learned of this only recently from another old member Carol Bartlett, who, with Maryam Rodway, regularly used to meet Joy in London for lunch and a matinee. Joy didn't respond to Carol's birthday card in October so she contacted the nursing home in Warwickshire where Joy had been living for some years, and heard news of her death.

Joy played for the Folk Players from 1953 to 1960 (10 productions) and for the Drama Club from 1953 to 1968 (7 productions). The highlight of these was her role as Lily Pepper in Noel Coward's *Red Peppers* singing and dancing opposite Louis Davis in the 1959 Welwyn Festival winner for the Drama Club, and as Maggie Cutler in *The Man Who Came To Dinner* for the Folk Players in 1953. Her last performance at the Barn was as Mrs. Venables in Mervyn Lloyd's version of *Suddenly Last Summer* in 1968 which opened with a jungle sound track and a startling tight spot on two heads – Joy in a pink wig and Keith Thompson with golden hair!

(Keith Thompson)

Joy Mellor(II)

I joined the Barn as a member of the old Welwyn Drama Club in 1953.

Joy was already a legend as an actress of considerable talent with a character to match! She was a very likeable, highly volatile lady, very bossy and very funny all rolled into one. My main memory is of Mervyn Lloyd's production of *Red Peppers* in June 1959. Joy played Lily Pepper and I played George Pepper. Joy and I put in extra rehearsals at my home in Radlett. Our first child, Jo, had been born in March that year and Joy used to come over after work, help me to bath the baby, have supper and then work our butts off singing and dancing that led to *Red Peppers* winning the Welwyn Festival.

As a young woman, Joy was in the WRNS and was posted to Bletchley Park, and was

there at the time the Enigma code was broken. Later posted to Sri Lanka she met Peter Brodie, who was Mountbatten's bodyguard and she and Peter and Lord Louis and another Wren went around as a foursome.

After the war she worked in Welwyn Garden in public relations for Smith Kline & French and when Peter Brodie was widowed, he married Joy. They settled in Warwickshire where he was Chief Constable. After his death Joy suffered a stroke and went into the nursing home where she died in June.

(Louis Davis)

Michael Bartlett

We were sorry to hear of the recent death of Michael Bartlett. Michael joined the Club last year when he successfully auditioned for the part of René in *Allo Allo*, and had just started rehearsals when his illness was diagnosed, and he had to retire from the production in order to undergo treatment. At the time he expressed his gratitude for the good wishes of all his new friends in the cast. We are sorry that we did not get a chance to work with him and enjoy his obvious good-natured company. Michael was an established member and leading player with Hertford Dramatic and Operatic Society, and to all his friends there, and to Chris and the family, we send our condolences.

Keith Grewcock

Keith Grewcock, who died unexpectedly at his home in St. Albans on 28th March, was an ex sub-postmaster at Bengeo who enjoyed sharing a joke and laugh with everyone. He appeared briefly at the Barn as the caretaker in *Don't Just Lie There Say Something*, and various parts in *The Coarse Acting Show*. He also was often to be seen as House Manager at the Barn, a job he also did at Castle Hall, Hertford. He was an ex-President of Hertford Dramatic & Operatic Society, and the Honorary Secretary at the time of his death.

An athlete in his youth, he was also a mainstay of the pantomimes and Old Time Musicals run by the late Phil Tomlin. His activities were severely restricted by a heart by-pass some 5 years ago. However, his sense of fun never left him, and he was still cracking gags on his deathbed. He was divorced, but he is survived by his three children and seven grandchildren. He was buried at the Herongate Green Burial Ground near Brentwood, and as an old friend I represented the Barn and gave the tribute at the funeral.

(Eric Chorley)

Alice Stull

We have just received the sad news of the death of Alice Stull. Our first record of her involvement at the Barn is in the history of the Welwyn Drama Club, compiled by her husband Harry, in which she is noted as prompter for the 1957 production of *Martine* directed by Belinda Putley. She was also wardrobe mistress and box office for a number of plays over the next few years.

Although not a member of the Barn Theatre Club in more recent years, she could not fail to be interested because Harry was the Club's official photographer, archivist and historian for a long period, and we were always pleased to see them both on their many visits, as lifetime supporters of the Barn. Our sincere condolences are sent to Harry.

(Keith Thompson)

Aldo Whistance Grant OBE

Grant died peacefully on Tuesday 25th July at about 5pm after his battle with cancer. His name (his last one anyway) is synonymous with set design and construction, both for the Barn Theatre and for other local companies, and he will be fondly remembered for his imagination, creativity and active role in the amateur theatre.

Grant loved the theatre and took great pleasure in designing and building sets. In total, he has probably built close to one hundred sets for theatre companies spanning the globe from Auckland through to Benghazi, as well as closer to home on the cliff tops of Porthcurno.

His first major construction on the Barn stage was for Lesley Valler's production of *Sleuth* in September 1985, having been introduced to the theatre two years earlier when he and Sue returned to the UK from Libya. It was a spectacular Art Deco design with large spiral staircases and a landing behind which was a 'stained glass' window. Derrick Baldock said in the Welwyn and Hatfield Times, "the set could have museums outbidding each other by the end of the week." It was one of Grant's favourite sets and set a bench mark for invention and quality which was to follow in all of his designs and builds.

Other memorable and challenging constructions included the first proper revolve used on the Barn stage for Jan Palmer Sayer's production of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1995). The whole thing was transported to the Felixstowe festival, which it won, and Rex Walford (adjudicator) used it to make his entrance for the last night award ceremony. Grant also loved doing *The Trial*, again for Jan, in 1998. His last complete build for the Barn was *Russian in the Woods* earlier this year, although he also assisted with the set for *Marry Me a Little*, which he was working on up until May.

To many members, Grant was something of an enigma and not just because he only went by one name; he was a fascinating character whose face undoubtedly held a thousand and one adventures. Most of us knew he was an architect, that he was a talented craftsman, and that there were rumours he has once won an award for an amazing building. He was also inseparable from his wife, Sue, and their frequently matching outfits, complete with mop caps, were always a talking point and a clear sign of the warmth and companionship they shared amongst themselves as well as with all their friends.

These thoughts only scratch the surface of what was an incredible life, one which took in many countries, architectural projects, and travels, and, at his own request, a life which will be celebrated later this month.

But what was special about Grant is that, regardless of all the success he achieved, he remained modest, fun-loving and supremely hospitable. Anyone who enjoyed the pleasure of his company would agree that he was a wonderful and most charming of human beings, and will be sorely missed.

In a toast to his memory, one Barn member quipped that Grant was already redesigning the pearly gates and white stairway as we drank.

Grant leaves his wife, Sue, daughters Stephanie and Frith, son, Gregor, and seven grandchildren.

Our thoughts and condolences are with them at this time.

(Keith Thompson)

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Jeffrey Bevan

We are sad to announce the death on 13th December of Jeff Bevan. He had been unwell for some time, but died suddenly and unexpectedly whilst visiting family and friends in Sussex.

With his partner Jan Chapman, Jeff was for several years one of the most reliable and effective of the Barn's team of bar volunteers, having previously been in the pub and hotel trade. An ex-submariner, he was a cheerful and interesting person to talk to, and although he never took part in a Barn production he will be sadly missed by many members.

Our condolences and deepest sympathy go to Jan and to Jeff's family.

John Lloyd

John Lloyd died just before Christmas in the Isobel Hospice. At the funeral at Knebworth Louis Davis. recounted many happy memories of his family life, from Janet, and his daughters Juliet and Johanna.

John was a creative father who made all sorts of gadgets and toys for his children and grandchildren, and this combination of the practical and the artistic was the essence of his lifetime involvement with the theatre.

Born in 1940 to Kathy and Arthur (both Barn members) the family had moved South from Lancashire in 1948. He joined the Technical Stage Management Course at RADA where he met Janet, who was also on the course, and subsequently worked at the Royal Court and on tour as a lighting assistant. After spells living in the Lake District and at Codicote, John and Janet moved to their house in Parkway in 1975. In 1992 after some years working for a medical equipment company, he was appointed Theatre Technician at Campus West and remained there until he retired in 2005.

His first appearance at the Barn was in 1954 as a choirboy in the Folk Players production of *The Man Who Came To Dinner*, and he continued to play for both Folk Players and Drama Club. He directed a play for the Youth Drama Festival in 1963. Since the formation of the Barn Theatre Club in 1969 John's name appears in the archives as an actor, lighting designer, set designer and set builder, sound effects man, musician (an enthusiastic banjo player) Council member, stage manager and costume designer.

Apart from the Barn John worked with and played for the Thaliens; Welwyn Opera; the Bill Griffin Music Hall; the Interluders and the Hertfordshire Players in Cornwall; and the Barnstormers Music Hall. He was on the technical team of the Youth Drama Festival and the stage crew of the Welwyn Drama Festival for many years, both at the old Embassy Theatre and then at Campus West. In Bill's Music Hall he was one of the famous *Baby On The Shore* quartet, and for the Barnstormers he researched Victorian parlour songs which he performed (*The Engineer's Child* was a favourite). He also devised, with Anne Woolmington, the spoof duettists Doris Delgado and Bert, performing *Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life* so enthusiastically that at a performance in Devon he fell off stage and broke his arm. Needless to say, he climbed back on stage to finish the number before being taken to hospital in Torquay.

Highlights of his acting career were the Fool in *King Lear* 1974, Truscott the detective in *Loot* 1977, Lt. Finsbury Popshaugh in *O Glorious Jubilee* 1977, one of the cricketers in *Willow Woe Is Me*, (our first All-England winner) in 1979, Ted in *Erpingham Camp*, (Welwyn Festival winner) 1983, Frank Doel in *84 Charing Cross Road*, and Geoffrey the nervous tap-dancer in our first production of *Stepping Out* in 1989.

More than highlights but simply outstanding were his sets for *A Christmas Carol* and *Journey's End*, and three wonderful performances of life's unfortunates: Smike in Mervyn Lloyd's *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* at the Minack in 1984; Merrick in *The Elephant Man*, also directed by Mervyn, which won both Felixstowe and Buxton festivals in 1985; and as Cletis in the much acclaimed *Lone Star*, All England finalist and NDFA All Winners winner, directed by Jan Palmer Sayer, for which, to cap it all, he got his picture on the cover of *Amateur Stage*.

John was a single-minded, dedicated, inventive enthusiast, with talent to spare. Theatrically he didn't do it all, but he got pretty close. We will miss him. Our sincere condolences are offered to Janet, Juliet, Johanna and their families.

(Keith Thompson)

Marjorie Hicks

Another link with the early days of drama in Welwyn Garden City has gone, with Marjorie's death in January 2007.

Marjorie moved to 26 Brockwood Lane with her parents in 1921, when she was three. Her parents joined the Labour Players (later renamed the Welwyn Folk Players) in 1924, and Marjorie could not remember a time when she also was not involved in plays. Her earliest appearance, at the age of 7, was as a cloud in the Dell production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1925. In 1928 she helped her father with props. for *As You Like It*, also in the Dell, when a stag's head on a pole got stuck on the fence as they were illegally crossing the Luton railway line between their garden and the Dell, just as a railway employee came by!

Marjorie was very active in the Folk Players until the early 1960s: she was joint membership secretary, supervised the costume store, helped with play-readings (even during the war), prompted, organised Club Nights, and was also a Hostess for the Welwyn Drama Festival for some years. She took only small parts on the Barn stage, but was usually involved in the hard work of putting on shows there in just two weeks!

(Marion Wells)

Peter Edgerley

Many of our older members knew Peter well, either by working with him at ICI or because, as Peggy's husband, he was a regular supporter of the Barn productions. Peggy was involved in many plays at the Barn up to 1989, and ran the Youth Group for many years with successes in the Youth Festival. Their daughter Clare was in two productions at the Barn back in the 1960's. Peter's name does not appear in our archives, but he saw many of our plays and he did *Front of House* for the Welwyn Drama Festival. A graduate of Oxford, Peter worked in research for ICI, and had also been at Bletchley Park during the war. A rugby enthusiast and a keen supporter of Welwyn Rugby Club, this was acknowledged by the choice of 'Swing Low Sweet Chariot' at the funeral at Knebworth.

Our condolences are offered to Peggy, and Clare and Neal and their families.

Bill Griffin

Bill Griffin died on 12th March 2007, at the age of 87. Until recently he and his wife Margaret had been familiar faces at the Barn Theatre, as regular playgoers rather than active members. It is not generally appreciated however, that Bill played a pivotal role in the formation of the Barn Theatre Club. In fact, the very existence of the Club in its present form owes much to Bill Griffin.

The Barn Theatre Club formally came into being on the 10th June 1969, following the amalgamation of the Welwyn Drama Club and the Welwyn Folk Players. At that time, from his origins in the Potteries and following war service in Alexandria, Bill had progressed to be Managing Director of the Welwyn Department Store. His empire therefore included the Welwyn Department Store Sports and Social Club, whose 'AmDram' component was the Howardsgate Players. They (including Bill) were occasional performers at the Barn Theatre, along with the Folk Players, the Drama Club, the Thaliens and the ICI Dramatic society.

Structurally the theatre was very different from today. Physically the theatre stopped at the back of the present stage. Beyond that boundary was Sports and Social Club territory, where the clunk of billiard balls could be heard beyond the cyclorama. There was no props corridor, no green room, no kitchen and very little rehearsal space. In 1970 Louis Davis (Chairman) and Judith Claxton (Social Secretary) negotiated with Bill Griffin (over lunch at the Crooked Chimney!) The outcome was that the Barn acquired all that extra space, in exchange for free membership for the WDS Social Club members. The Barn also acquired a considerable quantity of surplus carpeting, much of it still to be seen at the Barn.

As a result of the 1969–1970 activities, the Barn Theatre achieved a critical mass, which enabled it to mount new initiatives eventually leading to its present unique status in the Amateur Theatre.

Bill Griffin's association with the Barn Theatre produced advantages in both directions. An Old Time Music Hall tentatively launched at the Harvest Supper at St. John's Church, Lemsford in 1964 rapidly expanded into an annual event at the Campus College, sustained for over 25 years by the Welwyn Garden City Rotary and Inner Wheel organisations. Barn Theatre members provided talent and expertise in abundance, with Bill maintaining the focus. His trumpet playing was a regular feature, but the strongest element was his comedy. His control over audiences was complete, and everyone who experienced it in those early days appreciated that here was a very special talent.

After retiring from Welwyn Department Store he was called back to be Managing Director of Fortnum and Mason; a three-year posting which he much enjoyed.

(James Maxwell)

Milly Thompson

Milly died last month at the age of 99. A talented accompanist, Milly performed at many Barn club nights. Principally a Welwyn Thalian, she directed and played in many of their shows. Her parents ran a concert party in Newcastle and Milly became a professional oratorio singer and singing teacher. She came to the Garden City in 1939 and until recently was still organising the ladies' choir at Woodside House.

We send our condolences to Angela and Peter Dunham and their family

Robert Kenneth Alcock CBE

Ken died on 22nd April shortly after a stroke which had incapacitated him severely. At the funeral at Knebworth on 4th May his son Alistair gave a eulogy which allowed his friends at the Barn glimpses of his family life and career in the Royal Navy, from which he retired with the rank of Captain. We had only known him as a friendly and efficient Front of House Manager who had interesting and well-expressed opinions about our dramatic efforts.

Born in Southampton in 1925 into a naval family (his grandfather had been torpedoed and sunk in World War I and saw active service again in the Second World War) Ken was evacuated to Bournemouth during the war, an account of which he gave movingly and hilariously at the club night organised by Tony Powell several years ago. He passed up opportunities to go to RADA and Cambridge and read science at Southampton, and was called up at the end of the war into the RN. He served in the ships lying off Murmansk to listen to Russian signals traffic and later all around the world, his new wife Nina (they wed in 1949) joining him at his posting to Trincomalee in Ceylon. He completed his time as head of the Naval Meteorology Service, and retired to work for the Chartered Institute of Transport.

Alistair described Ken's three passions: the sea, opera and Shakespeare. These were all beautifully represented at the funeral. 'Eternal Father' (the seafarers' hymn) and a naval prayer were complemented by music from Fauré's Requiem and Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, and Alistair finished the eulogy with a speech from *The Tempest*. We offer our sincere condolences to Nina and the family.

(Keith Thompson)

Richard Foster

Richard Foster, the Barn's Membership Director, died peacefully following a heart attack on Saturday 9th June. He was 61 years old.

Richard was born in Sale, Cheshire and was educated at Manchester Grammar School and the Universities of London and Edinburgh, where he caught the bug of acting. His fast-moving career in education left him with little time for treading the boards, but he was a frequent visitor to theatres in local towns and London. In 1982 he was appointed as Head of Monk's Walk School, Welwyn Garden City. He was introduced to the Barn that year. Richard and his wife Barbara became members immediately, and were regularly seen in the audience. His first public performance for the Club was in April 1997, a Club Night entertainment of *St George for Merrie England*, in which he read from *Henry V*. His meticulous attention to this role showed him to be someone who took his theatre seriously.

In 2000 he was cast as Ligarius in *Julius Caesar*, which, after its run at the Barn, won the Felixstowe Festival, where Richard received a commendation in the supporting actor category. Upon retirement he was immediately cast as Conan Doyle in *The Lure of the Reichenbach* and at the Watford Festival where he was awarded the cup for best actor. However, his most memorable role was as Sir Thomas More in *A Man for all Seasons*. His acting at the Barn had taken off and he was sometimes in three productions a year, always with Barbara working on crew. His last performance was as Gerry in the Barn production of *Time of my Life* at the Hertford Festival earlier this

year, which won the festival.

Richard, upon retiring from education, became a JP. He travelled widely, was a lover of steam railways, a connoisseur of wines, and a supporter of Watford Football Club and Saracens Rugby Club. He was a reader of plays and Steward for the Welwyn Drama Festival, where he enjoyed meeting and greeting the supporters at the top of the stairs each night. He embraced with enthusiasm his visits to the Minack Theatre in Cornwall, last year in *The Three Musketeers*, and before that on the Front of House team. His dramatic abilities were also appreciated at Benington Church, where he was asked to read the lesson on numerous occasions.

He will be remembered for his Front of House presence at the Barn, his attention to detail in his role as Membership Director and for being a lovely man. He will be missed around the Club.

Our condolences are with Barbara, and Richard's family.

John Gardiner

We were sorry to hear of the death in July of John Gardiner of Hitchin. Mostly involved at the Queen Mother Theatre, where some of his own works were presented, (*Big Al*, *Sapristi Scapino*, and the children's fantasy horror musical *Dracula Spectacular*, which was published and had many productions all over the country) he was part of two Barn productions; when he directed the sword fights in Hugh Croydon's *King Lear* in 1974, and wrote and compiled *Put That Light Out*, a World War II medley of sketches and songs directed by Joan Goodwin in 1977.

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Bramwell

It is with sad news that we learn of the death of Bramwell, one of an elite few animal actors to grace the Barn stage. Those of you who saw *Of Mice and Men* will remember his fine performance as Candy's dog. Our condolences go out to Bramwell's owner, Norman De Vaux Reynolds and family.

Pam Gibson

Pam died in QEII on October 5th, after a very short illness which occurred at a time when it seemed she might be recovering from recent setbacks.

Pam and her husband Tim met in an amateur drama group in Cardiff and moved to Hertfordshire in 1967. Both were members of the ICI Dramatic Society, a strong group which regularly played at the Barn, and of the Hertfordshire Players, and were involved in productions at the Minack Theatre in Cornwall. She had played for the Folk Players in their acclaimed production of *Boeing-Boeing*. In November 1969, in our inaugural season, Pam played Miss Brewster in *Trelawny of the Wells*, and later that season was the prompter for *Relatively Speaking*.

An occasional actress, Pam nonetheless was involved in many plays during the 70's and 80's at the Barn, working as a production secretary, stage manager and ASM, props and box office, and mostly doing lighting. Her last credit in our archives is as

ASM for *Wild Honey* in 1990. Pam also served on the committee of the Youth Festival and had been a hostess for the Welwyn Drama Festival. As a ballet and opera fan, she was a Friend of Covent Garden.

An enthusiastic and companionable member, Pam was often helping with the social programme particularly the catering side of the events.

We send our condolences to Tim, and remember with affection and gratitude Pam's involvement in so many aspects of our theatre.

George Rowles

We are sorry to report the death on 4th December of George Rowles, the father of James Rowles. Although not a Barn member, George had been a long-standing season ticket holder at the Barn, and was known to many members. Our sincere condolences go to James and his family.

Martyn Jones

After a long illness Martyn was taken into hospital again and died on Christmas Day. His involvement with the Barn was on three main levels – as Finance Director for five years; as a Stage Manager and as an actor.

Martyn took on the job of Cash Manager for the Barn in 1999, when Keith Price was our Finance Director. He did the job extremely well, so when Keith resigned the following year Martyn was the obvious choice to replace him. For the next five years he combined the role of Finance Director with his previous job of Cash Manager, a strenuous combination even without the additional burden of a full-time university job. Keith had made a good start in turning round the Barn's finances, which had been in a very poor position when he took over, and Martyn enthusiastically built on Keith's foundations. He was a strong supporter of the ten shows per year policy, and kept a stern eye on both costs and prices. He was particularly energetic in his support of the bar, not just as a volunteer bar-man but in many other aspects of its running.

As a Director of the Club Martyn was firm in his recommendations and skilled at persuading other Council Members which path, we should choose. Although fairly quietly spoken he could be forceful when the prosperity of the Club was at stake.

After five years under his guidance the Barn had built up cash reserves in excess of £100,000, and the need for such a war chest was amply demonstrated in 2006, when we were faced with the simultaneous needs of replacing rotten cladding, replacing the central heating system, carrying out major electrical work, and refurbishing the foyer. He was justifiably proud of the healthy position in which he had left the theatre, where he will be sorely missed.

As an actor Martyn only rarely set foot on stage but he was a skilled Stage Manager. He was preparing to undertake this role again last summer when he was taken ill again and reluctantly had to stand down.

We only saw his interest in theatre, and enjoyed his pleasant, relaxed and undemanding personal style. We discovered at his funeral, where Harwood Park was filled to overflowing, that he was a golf fanatic, and learned of his professional life. Eulogies were spoken by his golf partner (and best man), one of his students, the

Head of Business Studies at the University of Hertfordshire, and his stepdaughter Shibel. He was clearly highly regarded as a tutor, and loved as a husband, father and step- father.

He faced his fate with good humour and courage. At our last meeting in October, when we were chatting about what was happening at the Barn, he said to me 'You'd better give me a bloody good obituary in *Barn News*' and laughed. We left Harwood Park with his choice of music, Eric Idle's 'Always Look on the Bright Side of Life' to remind us of him. A lunch at the Barn afterwards was attended by most of the mourners.

We offer our condolences to his wife Ching, his step daughter Shibel, and his three daughters.

(Keith Thompson)

Ann Chapman

Ann died just after Christmas from a sudden bout of pneumonia. At the Barn she had been in a number of productions, most recently in *The Art of Coarse Acting*, in which she had played several parts in the ensemble. Only a year ago she had, together with Maryam Rodway, presented a Club Night of World War II music and drama for which she had researched and written much of the narrative. As a valued member of the Welwyn Wailers, Ann played for them in their annual charity concert, excelling as one of the Andrews Sisters, a regular item to which everyone looked forward.

funeral, and the Barn was well represented. A letter from an old friend, now in Australia, was read, and her son Miles spoke of her early life which included being a student at the London School of Drama, her professional achievements (culminating in her work as secretary to an MP) and their family life.

We offer our condolences to Richard and Miles and the family.

Peggy Edgerley

Peggy can properly be regarded as a founder member of the Barn Theatre Club, being appointed to the very first Council in 1969 as one of four representatives for the Folk Players, one of the two groups who had formed the Club by amalgamation. She played Madame Xenia in *The Killing of Sister George*, which was the second production by the new Club. In the second season her Youth production of *Ernie's Incredible Illucinations* won the technical award at the Youth Drama Festival. In the third season, still on Council, Peggy directed another award- winning youth production and played Siddie, the most mature of *Alfie's* conquests.

Regularly appearing both onstage and backstage she ventured into the world of panto by directing our first effort at this most difficult of genres, *Jack and the Beanstalk* in 1976, and played The Toothless Hag in *O Glorious Jubilee* a year later. She was in every sense a stalwart of the Club in its early days. Her last mention in our archives is playing in *The Jew of Malta* and doing props for *Cat On a Hot Tin Roof*, both in 1989.

She helped to get the Youth Group up and running and continued to lead it through many successful years. She was also a regular with the ICI Dramatic Society in their many ventures at the Barn, and it was with them that she won the coveted Welwyn Medal for Best Actress at the Welwyn Festival in 1981, for her performance in

Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*.

Outwardly a little stern, but when you got to know her a most rewarding personality, Peggy had strong views and was unashamedly 'of the old school', which probably helps to account for her success with the youth group. At the funeral her grandchildren read a poem and we heard Acker Bilk's *Stranger On The Shore*. At a reception at the Barn afterwards we had an opportunity to renew our acquaintanceship with Neil and Claire, and we offer them our condolences.

Doris Day

Doris Day died on 27th December 2007. Doris was a member of the Barn in the 1970s when she was living in Hatfield.

She was first involved in drama in a small Hertfordshire village through the Townswomen's Guild, and became a highly respected adjudicator. She resigned from the Club when it was realised that her membership would compromise her adjudicating us in festivals. She was a member of GoDA from 1971, and Chairman from 1990 to 1993. She retired from the Guild as a practising member in 1994. She then became a prolific playwright.

Richard Scoffham

For many members the name of Richard Scoffham will mean very little. For others, however it will bring back memories of Welwyn Garden City Urban District Council, of which he was the Engineer and Surveyor, and Planning Officer. The town centre and the Coronation Fountain are testament to his love for plants, trees and good planning. He was also a man who loved music and theatre, and the Barn was very dear to him.

When I first knew him in 1966, he and his wife Elizabeth were already local drama members and rarely missed a show at the Barn. His real value to the Barn however was his practical skills. When the old workshop and scene dock were changed into the clubroom, it was decided that Stage 2 of the plan would be to have a 'covered way' between the auditorium and the clubroom. (Previously you walked out of the auditorium by the gent's loos, along the path and into the clubroom). The decision had been taken to use volunteers, as the cost of the work to be done professionally would be a £1,000! The work commenced in 1965/66 and then the usual problems arose of volunteer labour. There was never enough of it. So, (hopefully, unbeknown to the residents of WGC) Richard would disappear from the office for a few hours every so often and work on the roof of the covered way! There were also occasions when Council workmen were also roped in! The work was eventually finished after two years and Sir Frederic Osborn formally opened the covered way in 1968.

Richard died this week, aged 95, after a happy retirement in Dorset.

Our condolences go to his sons, Christopher, Stephen and David and their families.

(Tina Jolly)

David Best

We are sorry to report the death on 28th March of Barn member **David Best**. David was best known to most of us as Tania Turton's regular companion at Barn productions. We send our condolences to Tania and his family.

Margaret McKeever

Margaret who died on April 26th aged 92, will be remembered with gratitude by Barn members as being one of the founders of Festival Costumes. She, with Kathy Lloyd, who were both fine seamstresses with an excellent knowledge of period costume, built up a collection of costumes and accessories that were used in productions by the Folk Players at the Barn as well as for the Interluders when they performed at the Minack theatre in Cornwall.

When the various drama groups amalgamated to form the Barn Theatre Club in 1969, Margaret and Kathy decided to form a costume hire business and Festival Costumes was born.

Margaret, with her husband Mike – or Mack as he was frequently called – were great supporters of the Barn. Margaret had studied art at St Martin's College in London and developed an interest in costume design. Her gift of being able to make a garment following the design from a painting or picture and without a pattern was invaluable. Her black and white striped 'Renoir' dress is still worn, despite beginning to show its age.

Sadly, after Mack's death in 1996, Margaret's mental health deteriorated and her latter years were spent at St Andrew's Home, so she was unable to comprehend that Festival Costumes is now at the Barn – but it would give her much pleasure and satisfaction to know that what she and Kathy started years ago has now come home. Our condolences go to her family and friends.

Bridgette Hadfield

We regret to report the death on 18th May of Bridgette Hadfield. She had not been an active member of the club in recent years, but had been an active front-of house volunteer during shows.

Martin Hoar

We are sad to announce the sudden death of former member Martin Hoar on 14th June after a short illness. Martin never appeared on the stage, preferring the technical side of things, and was also a talented photographer, most notably in the 1980's for *Private Lives*, and more recently taking portraits for our production of *Gigi*.

Eva Watkins

We are sad to report the death of Eva Watkins, who died peacefully in hospital in the early hours of 25th July, after a long and courageous struggle against cancer.

Eva began her active career at the Barn as Production Secretary to her daughter Zoë, but subsequently branched out to cover other areas of backstage work, including production photographs and, most particularly, costumes. She played a key part in the running of Festival Costumes, was heavily involved in the upkeep and repair of the collection, and was on the rota for hiring sessions.

It is not widely known that she had a major collection of food tins, some of them very valuable, and she recently donated quite a lot of them to the Barn for use as props and set dressing for period productions.

Eva was a vivacious and committed member of every team she worked with, and will be sorely missed by her many friends at the Barn. We send our sincere condolences to Trevor, Zoë and Kay.

SEASON 2008 – 2009

Eric McKercher

We are sad to report the death on 23rd November of Eric McKercher, at the age of 92. He was a stalwart of the Barn (having originally joined the Welwyn Folk Players) from the fifties through to the seventies, when he and his wife Jean moved to Bedford – though Jean remains a member to this day.

Eric stage-managed and built the sets for many plays and musicals, including *Maria Marten*, *Diary of Anne Frank*, *I Remember Mama*, and *Gigi*. His all-time favourite was the complex and challenging set for *Under Milk Wood*, directed by Mervyn Lloyd. The last production he was involved in at the Barn was Raymond Aspey's production of *Dear Antoine*, in 1976, which he stage managed. He is remembered as a cheerful and highly efficient stage manager.

Our sincere condolences go to Jean and to Eric's family in their sad loss.

Desmond Harper

Desmond's early-stage experience came with the Northern Polytechnic Operatic Society, which gave him a love of Gilbert and Sullivan, which he was never able to demonstrate at the Barn. He was the Duke of Venice in the inaugural Interluders production of *The Merchant of Venice* at the Minack Theatre in Cornwall in 1964, making a spectacular first appearance down the main auditorium staircase wearing a magnificent peacock cloak, and over the years he appeared at the Minack with the Interluders and the Hertfordshire Players on many occasions. In the Welwyn Drama Club's *One Way Pendulum* in 1967 he played the Judge.

Desmond's first appearance for the Barn Theatre Club was in 1973 in Louis Davis's production of *On Approval*, which replaced *Private Lives* when we encountered licensing problems with the original choice. This four-handed sophisticated comedy allowed the cast full rein to demonstrate their talents. Desmond appeared regularly for the Club over the next 25 years, the highlights being his Teddie Deakin, the archetypal 'silly ass' in *The Ghost Train* in 1983, and the heartless Colonel in *Journey's End* in 1991. Along the way he had played Lenin in *Travesties* in 1985, Orgon in *Tartuffe*, in 1988, and the Governor of Malta in *The Jew of Malta* in 1989. Among his final appearances were two of his best; the seedy journalist in *Racing Demon* which won the Felixstowe Festival in 1996 and the small gem of Tubby, appearing as from the basement via the stage trap in *Hobson's Choice* in 1998. His last appearance was in *Julius Caesar* in 2000.

At the funeral at St. Mary's Welwyn the church was full and the congregation was in good voice. His son James gave a eulogy which focused on Desmond's interests and passions, and their loving family life. Caroline read a passage from Corinthians. Anne supplied the final words; an appreciation of those who had cared for Desmond during his last illness. We extend our sincere condolences to Anne, James, Caroline and the members of the family.

Jim Rousell

We are sad to report the sudden death on 26th January of Jim Rousell. Although he had only been a Barn member for less than two years, Jim made an enormous contribution to the set building team on many productions. He was also a regular bar and box office volunteer. We send our condolences to Yvana and to Jim's family.

Peter Andrews

We were sorry to hear of the death of Peter, who was a regular member up to five years ago, and often helped with the bar. He had been living in Graveley since moving away. We send our condolences to Joyce.

Shirley Thompson

'Ask Shirley' was how John Cook began the obituary at Shirley Thompson's funeral in St. Mary's Church, Welwyn, on the 5th March. The warm ripple of laughter that came from the many people in the church said everything about how we all feel when thinking about her. Whatever we needed to know, Shirley would have the answer, and if it was a job to do, then it was very likely that she would offer to do it. We are all missing her very badly and we send our heartfelt commiseration to Keith, Ruth, Stephen and all their family on the loss of such a loved and gracious lady. Before marrying Keith, Shirley had a fascinating career as a Medical Secretary to a forensic pathologist in London and would accompany him on murder cases all over the capital. She featured in several articles in the press, which delighted in the fact that such a young and attractive woman was dealing with such gruesome events. Latterly she worked as Secretary to the Eye Surgeon, John Bolger, at the BUPA hospital in Harpenden, when she had the dubious reward of being requested to work on after the normal retirement age.

Shirley was an excellent home-maker; her family was paramount and she had a great pride in all their achievements. We all benefited from the lovely stories she told about her grandchildren. At the Barn, as well as being excellent company, she was a fine Production Secretary, coffee maker, caterer, box office and bar tender and above all, latterly, an energetic worker on organising the Wardrobe to form Festival Costumes. Many of the jobs that she did were behind the scenes and enabled the work of the Barn to run more smoothly. The gap that she left is huge, and we shall continue to appreciate and miss all that she did.

Shirley moved to St. Albans with Keith in 1964. They had been in a church drama group, the Wykeham Players, in Harrow, and appeared in several plays together. When they arrived in Hertfordshire, they became involved in a new group being formed by Derek Ritchie to take a play to the Minack Theatre, and went there to perform in *The Merchant of Venice* in 1964. This started a deep involvement with the Minack, as Shirley was one of the managers of The Hertfordshire Players for twenty-eight years, taking fifteen plays to Cornwall and playing in several of them. It was also in 1964, encouraged by the contacts they had made, that they joined CoPs Hertford and the Welwyn Drama Club.

Ruth was born in 1965 and Steve in 1967 so Shirley had little opportunity to get fully involved in drama while she had a young family. Her first mention in the records is

doing props for *Trelawny of the Wells* in 1969, the third production of the newly formed Barn Theatre Club. In October 1970 she put her Yorkshire accent to good use when she played Annie Parker in *When We Are Married*. From then until 2008, when her final involvement with a production was doing Wardrobe for Keith's production of *Dad's Army*, the list of plays she was either in or working backstage for is awesome. Alongside all this she was Club Secretary for three years, was Production Secretary for several Barn entries in the All-England Finals and our All-British winner in 1996, as well as for the overseas venture when the Barn took *Round and Round the Garden* to perform in Florida in 2002.

She found time to fit in a brief spell as Social Director of the Welwyn Drama Festival, and to organise and perform in a charity music-hall, the Barnstormers, which played all over the county for seventeen years.

A moment which the family all treasure was in *Toad of Toad Hall* in 1977 when, for a short scene, the only actors on stage were the Thompson family - Keith as Toad, Shirley as Mama Rabbit, and Ruth and Steve as Lucy and Harold Rabbit.

Shirley should have been Production Secretary for *The Cripple of Inishmaan* but, sadly, that was not to be and Keith has taken over in her place. He, like us, will no doubt continue to wish that we could 'Ask Shirley'.

(Judith Claxton)

Tim Gibson

Tim (real name Norman) was a member of the ICI Dramatic Society, which performed at the Barn many times and developed close links with the Barn Theatre Club. Inevitably many of their members also played for us and there was great camaraderie and rivalry between the groups. Tim was in the Barn Theatre Club's inaugural production of *Fings Ain't Wot They Used T'be* as Paddy in 1969, and a couple of months later as O'Dwyer in *Trelawny of the Wells*. He then appeared regularly on stage, and occasionally backstage, over the next five years. He was a memorable, sadly cuckolded Harry Clamacraft in *Alfie* in 1972, and Howard Wagner in *Death of a Salesman* in 1973.

In the early 1970s he played at the Minack Theatre in Cornwall for the Hertfordshire Players, most chillingly as a threatening, sedan chair carrying thug in *The Visit* in 1974. At the end of the 1974 season, he appeared at the Barn in *Caught Gauguin*, *Bowled Cezanne*, and as the Duke of Burgundy in *King Lear*. Thereafter he seems to have lost interest in being on stage, but he did make an appearance as a pirate in *Peter Pan* in 1988.

He was Bar Chairman and Social Director during the 1990s, a role very suited to his convivial social style. In many of the plays in which he was involved he was accompanied by his late wife, Pam, who often worked backstage. Elsewhere he was a keen supporter of the Rugby Club.

In recent years his health prevented him from visiting the Barn very often, but he kept in touch.

Our condolences go to his family and friends.

Derek Richie

Derek died in hospital in Spain last month after contracting a pulmonary fibrosis while receiving treatment for pneumonia.

In 1963 Derek, while on holiday in Cornwall, visited the open air cliffside Minack Theatre and, as an amateur drama enthusiast, decided to form his own company to present a play there. In the spring of 1964, he advertised the project and the response, principally from HD&OS and the then newly formed CoPs, ensured that the production of *The Merchant of Venice* went ahead that summer, directed by Derek Forbes, with Derek Ritchie in the role of Shylock. He called his company The Interluders, and they presented four more plays at the Minack and one, in 1968, at Saltram House near Plymouth. In the last of these, in 1969, Derek played a memorable Richard III.

His first appearance at the Barn was as Jemmy Twitcher in the joint Drama Club/Folk Players production of *The Beggar's Opera* in April 1964. In 1971 he directed the thriller *The Sound of Murder* for the Barn Theatre Club, and he worked on lighting and effects for *The Seagull* and *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* later that year.

Due to his work commitments (he was, variously: the lockkeeper at Teddington; ran his own sea training school near Chichester; and ran Festival Workshop, the Welwyn based stage equipment company for some years, rigging lighting for amateur and professional productions all over the country) he handed the Interluders to Denis Butcher and Keith Thompson in 1972 and it was renamed The Hertfordshire Players. When back problems prevented him continuing as the lock keeper at Teddington, he and Ann moved to North East Spain, where they set up a business caring for expats' properties, which was successful for over twenty years. They kept in touch with the Club and their friends via *Barn News* and regular visits home. In 2003 they returned to the UK, first to Scotland and then to Welwyn. During this period, he became the Services Director of the Club, and efficiently reorganised the maintenance contracts which ensure that this difficult old building is kept up to scratch. In 2008 Derek and Ann returned to Spain to live.

Two significant developments are probably due to him. One is the multiple membership of amateur drama groups locally, fostered by people meeting each other in The Interluders and joining other groups: the other is the many members we have who now play at The Minack Theatre for the two local companies who regularly perform there, neither of which might have existed but for Derek's vision over forty years ago.

We offer our sincere condolences to Ann and Samantha and the family.

(Keith Thompson)

SEASON 2009 – 2010

George Swanson

Sadly, my Dad, George Swanson, passed away while we have been up in Edinburgh. The Barn held a very special place in his heart and he was a member for many many years. As the Director of Services at Welwyn Hatfield Council he was enormously proud of the social and cultural role the Barn played in the community. He also loved watching the plays, especially if they involved one of his sons or, lately, grandchildren. At his funeral we asked for donations to be made to the Barn Theatre.

(Danny Swanson)

Joyce Croydon

Joyce Croydon died on Sunday September 4th. Many of her Barn friends were at the Harwood Park Crematorium on Thursday 15th for the funeral service. Hugh and Joyce had met at the Hammersmith Palais in the 1950s and were married at Ealing 58 years ago, the service being conducted by Hugh's father, who was the Vicar of Ealing. Hugh was involved in drama even then, and persuaded Joyce to be the prompter in a production: but having done it once, she persuaded Hugh that she would never again be tempted onto the stage in any capacity, and never was. She remained, however, a regular member of audiences at many amateur and professional performances.

Joyce was a keen supporter of the Barn and enjoyed Hugh's productions and performances, though we heard at the funeral eulogy that she had taken Hugh to task early in their marriage for his enthusiasm in the love scenes in *Look Back In Anger*. The eulogy was given by her son-in-law Kirk, describing Joyce as a lady with 'class', and the prayers were offered by her daughter-in-law, Cynthia. We offer our sincere condolences to Hugh, and son Kim and daughter Joanna and their families.

Margaret Griffin

We are sad to report the death of Margaret, Bill Griffin's widow, after a long illness. The funeral will be held at Harwood Park Crematorium on Monday 30th November, at 11 am. Our condolences to the family.

Janet Aspey

Those of our long-standing members who knew her will be sad to learn of the death of Janet Aspey on January 15th. Janet had been ill for over ten years, suffering from cancer, and has fought an amazing fight, against all odds and in defiance of all medical opinion, and has only now succumbed.

Janet was the middle one of Roy and Frances Brewer's three daughters. In 1928, the Brewers were amongst the early settlers in Welwyn Garden City and were founder members of the Barn as a theatre in 1932 and of the Welwyn Drama Festival in 1929. The Brewer girls were all born in Handside Lane, Janet being born in September, 1930. She went to Stanborough School and then to Corsham Art College where she obtained a degree in Art, and then went on to teach at St. Julian's School, St. Albans, where she met her husband, Ray Aspey.

They moved back to Welwyn Garden City, where their four children, Jane, David, Mark and Sally, were born, and where Janet taught art at Howlands School and Ray taught music at Heronswood School.

Like her father, Roy, Janet was an excellent actress, appearing in many productions at the Barn Theatre, the first recorded one being *Lady Precious Stream* in March 1948, in which she played the *Lady* of the title's maid. It was produced by H. A. G. Baker for the old Welwyn Drama Club. Several notable performances followed, among which the role of the daughter in Jean Anouilh's *Point of Departure* in December 1955, produced by Mervyn Lloyd, and the role of Sheila in Alan Ayckbourn's *Relatively Speaking*, in January 1970, produced by Mike McKeever, stand

out. The last production she was in at the Barn was as Lydia Cruttwell in Terence Rattigan's *In Praise of Love*, directed by David Shepherd in January 1978. The whole family loved going to the Minack Theatre in Cornwall and were involved in several productions, first with The Interluders' presentation of *The Canterbury Tales*, and then several with The Hertfordshire Players, the last of which was *Dark of the Moon* in the summer of 1982. Soon after that, Janet and Ray moved to Norfolk where they have lived ever since. Our sympathy goes out to Ray, who will be ninety-five on February 3rd; to their children, Jane, David, Mark and Sally; to their six grandchildren, and to her sisters, Anne Davis and Mary Petschek.

Eric While

Born and bred in WGC, in his younger days Eric raced motorbikes and was a keen grass-tracker and trials competitor until the arrival of his two daughters, Tiffany and Sara, curtailed these activities. A keen interest in wine followed and in later years he became a dedicated aero-modeler, flying (and crashing) his model planes at Old Warden and Ivinghoe Beacon. He was also a loyal supporter of the Barn Theatre, from its inception in 1969 right up until his death in December. The last production he saw was *Shirley Valentine*, and though he missed much of it (he was taken ill about 15 minutes into the performance) he thought that what he had seen was excellent, Natalie Gordon being one of his favourite actresses! However, for him nothing much compared to the Barn's 1969 production of *The Crucible*, in particular the performance of his wife, Janet, as Mary Warren. That nothing would ever compare to this became a long-standing family joke and, right up until Janet's directorial debut with *Gigi* in 2005, nothing did. Though never a member of the Barn, Eric was a keen and enthusiastic supporter of the Club and could often be heard saying "It's better than the West End, you know". Eric's name never appeared in a programme, but he always supported Janet, Tiffany and Sara in their theatrical endeavours, running costumes to and from rehearsals and even trying his hand at a spot of set wallpapering and painting. He was immensely proud of what his family achieved here at the Barn, and thoroughly enjoyed coming to see the wide variety of shows that the club has offered over the last forty years.

Marion Canadine

Marion Canadine who died recently, aged 96, first appeared at the Barn in 1952 as a member of the Welwyn Folk Players. She acted in many of their plays, sang in a musical, and also organised wardrobe with Kathy Lloyd. After the WFP became part of the Barn Theatre Club in 1969, Marion continued to act for many years. Her last appearance on stage was in *The Matchmaker* in April 1986.

She was elected to the Barn Council in the 1970s, and coordinated arrangements for many social occasions. Her great interest in costume led her to organise wardrobe for many plays, and later to join Kathy Lloyd and Margaret McKeever at Festival Costumes. Off stage she took on the jobs of Production Secretary, Prompt or ASM: her last mention in the Club records was as ASM for *Dancing at Lughnasa*, in 1995.

Marion's interests also included helping with the Welwyn Drama Festival, and acting with the Hertfordshire Players at the Minack Theatre in Cornwall.

For the last few years Marion was in poor health, so could no longer take part in these activities, but she still enjoyed visits from various members to hear about the Barn, and to look at the latest *Barn News*.

Our condolences go to her son Bruce and his family, who live in Florida.

Denis Butcher

Denis Butcher died on Saturday June 19th in Harlow Hospital. He had been in hospital as result of a fall at home.

Denis had been a member of Ware Dramatic Society, and had also become involved with the Interluders, the group which visited the Minack Theatre in Cornwall in the 1960s. In 1972 the company changed its name to The Hertfordshire Players and Denis and his wife Marie became joint managers of the group together with Keith and Shirley Thompson. Over the next twenty-eight years they took fifteen plays to the Minack, winning the coveted Minack Trophy on three occasions. As a result of this inter-Club involvement Denis was eventually lured to the Barn.

His first credit is as musical adviser to Keith Bridgeman's production of *The Cherry Orchard* in 1993. Denis was an accomplished amateur musician with a wide ranging knowledge of the classics which was often put to good use in the plays in which he was involved. He was both an actor and director, playing leading roles and directing for The Hertfordshire Players and guest directing for Sawbridgeworth and Potters Bar.

He appeared on our stage as Peachum in *The Beggar's Opera* in 1995, played several roles in *Sherlock Holmes and the Lure of the Reichenbach* in 1995, and also played in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in that year. In 1996 he directed *Pride and Prejudice*, a favourite of his. He was a fine photographer, and undertook production photos on several occasions. In 2001 he played Frank in our festival entry *She Walks in Beauty*, a particularly moving role. Tall and elegant, and with a fine voice, he cut a commanding figure on stage in roles such as Major Ross in *Our Country's Good* and Victor in *Gigi*. His comic talent was evident in *The Coarse Acting Show* and as Private Sponge in *Dad's Army*, his last appearance at the Barn, in 2008.

Devoted to his family, he was gentle and considerate, and first-rate company, with an enthusiasm for the arts. We send our sincere condolences to Marie, Martin, Sarah-Jane, and Emma and their families.

SEASON 2010 – 2011

Tony Cole-Hamilton

We were sad to hear the news of the death of Tony Cole-Hamilton, at the age of 95. A regular at CoPs in Hertford for many years, he played for a while at the Barn in the 1980s. A man of distinguished appearance and possessed of a magnificent voice (as befits a retired Lieutenant-Commander) he played authority figures with ease – such as the General in the 1981 production of *The Balcony*, and Justice Milhouse in *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* in 1983 – and surprised us all, later that year, with his excellent character cameo as Saul Hodgkin the Station- master in *The Ghost Train*.

His forthright approach coupled with his stentorian voice could be initially

forbidding, but he was good company and a true gentleman, kind, considerate and genuinely friendly.

We send our condolences to his family.

Isla Petch

Isla Petch is last mentioned in the history of The Barn Theatre Club playing Granny Weatherwax, at the age of 85, in *Wyrd Sisters*, January 1999, before she and Dennis moved away. Isla has died aged 97.

The word 'legendary' is most appropriate for her acting career. Originally a Folk Player, she won the Best Actress Award at the Welwyn Festival in 1962 in their production of *The Birthday Party*. She also joined the Drama Club in 1964 after playing Mrs. Slammekin in the joint production of *The Beggar's Opera*.

For the next three decades she was 'the one to watch'. Her performances lit up many productions. She also gained a reputation as an ingenious prop-maker.

In the Club's inaugural season in 1969 she played Avonia Bunn in *Trelawny of the Wells*, and ended that season as the archetypal Mrs. Drudge in the Festival winner *The Real Inspector Hound*. Memorable gems were: Mrs. Banks in *Barefoot in the Park* (1971); Amelia Grimpot in *Oh, Glorious Jubilee!* (1977); the Umpire in our first All-England winner *Willow, Woe is Me* (1979); Mother in the hilarious Cooney farce *It Runs in the Family* (1996); and Marina in *Uncle Vanya* (1997). One of her most outstanding performances was as Queen Victoria in The Hertfordshire Players' production *Alice in Wonderland* at the Minack Theatre in Cornwall in 1976, so regal and convincing when she entered to a fanfare at the beginning of Act Two the audience respectfully rose to its feet! In total contrast she played the libidinous Kath in Mervyn Lloyd's 1971 *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, unforgettable in a baby doll nightie and a blonde wig, gazing wistfully at Bob Harper's naked buttocks!

These are only fragments of the complete list of her successes. Every part she played was worth watching, individually created to gain maximum effect. She was a great team player as well, helping anyone in the cast, especially newcomers, to feel at ease at rehearsals. In addition to making props she would often make soft toys as gifts for the children of the cast as well.

Lively, interesting company, and always offering genuine, undemanding friendship and help, she was fully deserving of the love and respect in which she was held by everyone who spent time with her at the Barn. She gave the impression it was fun to be at the Barn. It was certainly fun to work with her.

After leaving the district for Lichfield, Dennis and Isla kept in touch with their many friends in WGC, and it was obvious they continued to lead very full lives. Isla still entertained at old folks' clubs with her monologues and character sketches. We send our condolences to Dennis, and son Ken and daughter Fay, and their families.

Dennis Heft

We have only just of the death on 5th August last year of Dennis Heft, at the age of 82. He taught English at Stanborough School until his retirement. Before the formation of the Barn Theatre Club in 1969 Dennis had appeared for both the Welwyn Drama Club and the Folk Players in the 1950's and 60's, most notably as Iago in Hugh Croydon's production of *Othello*. He did not, however, play for the new club

until 1985, as Capulet. He then re-established himself at the Barn with roles in *Vivat, Vivat, Regina, The Rivals* and, most memorably, as the ailing Arthur Winslow in Rattigan's *The Winslow Boy* in 1989. He played the Head in *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13 3/4* and finally, in 1993, Friar Francis in David Harrold's production of *Much Ado About Nothing*, before drifting away from the Barn again. Possessed of aquiline features and a commanding voice he was a redoubtable stage presence and a formidable addition to any cast. We send our condolences to his family.

Reg Gwilliam

Last year, aged 85, Reg Gwilliam was proud to make his acting debut on the Barn stage as The Reverend Eli Jenkins in *Under Milk Wood*. Sadly, Reg died on the 30th of April this year. His association with The Barn Theatre although, as a member, brief, was unforgettable. He charmed all who came into contact with him and made a valuable contribution to the friendship of the company. It was a special time for him, too, helping him overcome the loss of his wife Margaret. Having been headmaster of Monk's Walk School from when it opened in 1964 until 1982, Reg was no stranger to appearing in public, making friends and sharing his wealth of knowledge and interests with all around him. A regular theatregoer (alongside numerous other activities) his understanding of plays and playwrights was second to none. He was always up-to-date with new ideas and thinking and understood the true importance of the arts within a community. "He was such a lovely, gentle person and a proper gentleman." texted Tammy. For me, well, his wonderful performance – magnificent white hair shining and sonorous voice declaiming the words of Dylan Thomas – will stay with me always, and I shall write with the pen he left me, which I gave him. It is engraved "The Reverend Eli Jenkins".

(Coral Walton)

Frances Chown

Frances died on Saturday 4th June, aged 88 after a long illness.

She was first involved as prompter to the production of *Everything in the Garden* in 1974, and then regularly took on support roles as prompter, properties, costume, assistant stage manager and Production Secretary in over twenty plays, until her last appearance as a prompter for *Quartermaine's Terms* in 1997. Along the way she had assisted in a variety of productions, including: *The Odd Couple (Female Version), Put That Light Out, Pack of Lies, She Stoops to Conquer* and *Murder on the Nile*.

Her warm and friendly personality guaranteed that she was always a welcome member of any production team. A memorial service was held at the Free Church, Welwyn Garden City, on Friday 17th June.

Our sincere condolences are offered to her son Roger and her friends and family.

Sue Davies

We are sorry to report the death on 15th July of Sue Davies. Sue first joined the Barn with her husband John in 1975, and although she didn't renew her membership after their return from abroad in 1996, she was a regular audience member in later years. We send our condolences to John and the family.

SEASON 2011 – 2012

Gerald Sanctuary

We are sorry to announce the death on August 5th of Gerald Sanctuary, who was an active Tower member in the 1980s, and was also the Tower's General Secretary for a time. His son Nigel Sanctuary (who was also a member around that time) writes:

"In 1983 I joined the Tower Theatre, auditioning for the part of Christopher Isherwood in *I am a Camera*. I found the Tower because of my father, Gerald Sanctuary, who was very involved playing in various parts during the late 1970s and early 1980s. His most noticeable contribution was probably his capable and moving rendition of Sir in *The Dresser* by Ronald Harwood. Some of us, though, still applaud his gaffe in the first attempt he made as Sound Operator for *The Admirable Crichton*. The cast, having rehearsed fear and surprise in response to a sudden lion's roar from the surrounding jungle, had to adapt the script rapidly when Dad played the sound of an accordion being dropped. I don't quite remember how they got out of that one. Dad was an active member of the Committee, but reduced his commitment to the Tower when he moved back to St. Albans in the 1990s. Gerald had been suffering from advanced dementia for some time. He wanted me to let the Tower Theatre know of his death - theatre was important to his life and the Tower very much so. He will wish you all well, as I do, and hope that one day you get that new theatre you are striving for."

(Jack Wood)

Magaret Lickman

Margaret (Meg) Lickman was involved with the Barn Theatre Club from its formation. Her early association with the Barn came in the 1960s with the thriving ICI Drama Club, who were regular performers here. She played the leading role in our production of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* in 1971, directed by Carole Muscroft. After several outings in stage management, she directed Pinter's *Old Times* in 1978, Neil Simon's *The Gingerbread Lady* in 1981, and in 1983 triumphed with *The Dresser*, winning both the Felixstowe and Buxton Festivals with her production. She won the Welwyn Festival and three other one-act festivals in 1985 with Act III of *Abelard and Heloise*, which was also placed second at the All-Winners Festival. She followed this with *Peter Pan* in 1988 and *After the Lions* in 1989.

She will be remembered by her friends and associates at both ICI and the Barn as a demanding and precise director, encouraging and helpful, with an eye for quality in every aspect of production. Her reputation as 'a winner' was well-deserved.

Sadly, in declining health in recent years, we saw less of her at the Barn, but on her occasional visits she still sparkled with friendship and memories. We send our deepest condolences to her close friends Pat and Carole.

Mel Sutton

We sadly record the recent death of Mel Sutton. He and his wife Linda were keen supporters of the Barn and regular members of the audience. Mel had taught music at several local schools and worked for the Mid Herts Music Centre as well. Rachel Dawson recalls that Mel was accompanying the Mid Herts Junior Choir when she

joined it at the age of 7, and was still there when she came back to the district and became the Director of the choir. He conducted and composed, was a leading light with the WGC Music Society and Chamber Orchestra, and had been a Musical Director for the Thaliens and Herts G and S, for whom he also appeared on stage.

His name appears only once in our archives, as accompanist for a social evening over a dozen years ago, but he recently wrote for *Barn News* a review of last year's production of *The Magic Flute*.

We send our condolences to his family and friends.

SEASON 2012 – 2013

Hugh Croydon

Hugh died peacefully home, on 24th June. At the time of the amalgamation in 1969 he was a director and actor for the Welwyn Folk Players, and in the immediately preceding years he had won the Welwyn Drama Festival three times and the Behrens-Steinfeld Trophy for the director with the most imaginative approach twice. Applying his skills to the opportunities that the newly formed Barn Theatre Club offered, he was awarded the Hertfordshire Mercury 'Oscar' in 1970 as the best actor in the county for his riveting performance as George in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, and played the gold jacketed, shades wearing, bimbo-attracting Knockefeller in *Almost Like Being*, which won the Festival in 1975. His roles included the irritating slob Oscar in *The Odd Couple* (1978) and the sleazy Padre in *Erpingham Camp* which reached the All-England Final in 1983.

Despite these successes he was more in evidence as a director, tackling a wide range of theatre with skill and modesty, including *Rookery Nook* (1976) *A Winter's Tale* (1979) *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1980) *Where's Charley?* (1984) *Irma la Douce* (1985) *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1989) *Death and the Maiden* (1995) and his last production *The Herbal Bed* (2001). This is only a selection from his regular involvement - he appears in every year of the Club archives from 1969 to 2001.

He was an All-England Final winner three times - once as an actor in *27 Wagons Full of Cotton*, (1984), and twice as director, with *The Audition* (1982) and with *Plaza Suite Act III* in 1996 which went on to gain the ultimate accolade, the United Kingdom title.

Many members have benefitted from working with Hugh, and have enjoyed the process, his gentlemanly style accompanying his well-thought out and often inspired direction. His magisterial voice was equally imposing when, acting, directing, or just chatting in the clubroom. Outside the Club he was an English and drama teacher at Sherrardswood and then Sir Frederic Osborn schools, where he mounted many successful productions. He eschewed any involvement in the management of the Club, spending his 'free' time as a bon viveur with his beloved late wife Joyce, wining and dining at hotels and restaurants all over the country and in France.

His contribution to the artistic success of the Club will be difficult to match. The Barn was well represented at the cremation service. We send our condolences to his daughter Jo, his son Kim, and the family.

Harold Muncey

Harold died on Tuesday July 25th. He was a proud son of the local aircraft industry where he spent his career. His first appearance in our records is as a set-builder in 1976 and this was the beginning of over thirty years of being a regular member of that team, working on several plays in some seasons as part of a close group of friends who enjoyed working together and created some remarkable stage settings. He also in 1978 tried his hand as an A.S.M. and in 1982 as a Stage Manager. Later in 1982 he appears, just the once, in a cast list, as part of the group labelled 'Servants, Fellows and Maids' in Michael McKeever's production of *She Stoops to Conquer*.

Harold's hard work backstage over many years went hand in hand with his obvious enjoyment and appreciation of the social side of the Club. He was one of the 'Friday night regulars' in the bar, but in addition to this conviviality he worked at various times as Bar Manager and Cellarman to ensure that his companions got the best out of the Club's facilities.

Always friendly and enthusiastic, whether working on a set or just having a good time, Harold was part of the fabric of the Club and its long tradition of making the best use of people's skills, both backstage and front of house, while creating an ambience of good companionship which attracts so many people to the Club.

We offer our sincere condolences to Hazel, Susan and the family. The Barn was well represented at the funeral at St. Ethelreda's by his many friends, who will all miss him.

Denis Sandiford

Denis died on Friday 27th July. He does not appear in the Club archives because he did not get involved in productions, but as an audience member and supporter of his wife Marjorie in her backstage work in many plays and wardrobe team he had been an enthusiast whose warm friendship and quiet wit had made him enjoyable company at many Barn events. Due to a long illness we had not seen him at the Barn as much as we would have liked in recent years.

Our sincere condolences are offered to Marjorie and the family.

Ray Aspey

Ray died, peacefully, at his retirement home in Letchworth at the age of 97. He first appears in our records in the Welwyn Drama Club production of *The Mystery of the Marie Celeste* in 1959, directed by his father-in-law, Roy Brewer and alongside his brother-in-law Louis Davis. For more than twenty years he would be an occasional actor, and an accomplished director and musical director at the Barn, until he moved to Norfolk with his wife Janet (a leading Barn actress) in 1982.

His second appearance for the Drama Club was one of the most memorable, as Bert Bentley, the on-stage musical director and pianist in the Drama Club's winning production of *Coward's Red Peppers* at the Welwyn Drama Festival in 1959. He also directed *Hedda Gabler* (1970), *The Seagull* (1971), *Ring Round the Moon* (1974), and *Dear Antoine* (1976), and in 1974 was awarded the Behrens-Steinfeld Trophy as Best Director, at the Welwyn Festival, for *The Devil in Summer*. He played fiddle on the stage in a couple of plays, and was Musical Director for many: notably, *Oh! What a Lovely War* which opened on the 50th anniversary of the Armistice, on November

11th 1968; Fings Ain't Wot They Used To Be, the Club's inaugural production in 1969; Cabaret (1973); The Wizard of Oz (1975); O Glorious Jubilee (1977); and Something's Afoot (1980).

He often composed incidental music for plays, and in 1972 he scored an original musical version of Sweeney Todd which was presented by the Hertfordshire Players at the Minack Theatre in Cornwall (and again in 1992). It played as a Barn production in 1981. He was also, for many years, the Musical Director of the highly popular Bill Griffin Old Tyme Music Hall.

Just before the amalgamation of the Folk Players and the Drama Club in 1969 there was a series of joint productions by the two clubs as they sparred with the idea of creating a bigger club. These were: The Beggar's Opera (1964); An Italian Straw Hat (1966); The Wayward Way (1966); and Oh! What a Lovely War (1968). These were lavish musicals for which Ray was, on each occasion, the Musical Director, and therefore a major contributor to the success of the amalgamation.

He served on the Drama Club committee for a couple of years, and was Editor of Barn News for more than a dozen years. Apart from his involvement in the Club's formal events, those of us who were around in the 70s will remember a plethora of his highly enjoyable musical evenings and cabarets, which were then a regular feature at the Barn. A music teacher by profession, Ray composed, arranged, taught and played for many of our productions.

We offer our sincere condolences to Jane, Sally, Mark, and David, and the family.

Joan Lindgren

Joan died in May, at her retirement home, not having been in good health for a while. As Joan Salmon she appears many times in the Club archives, but after Mott's death and her marriage to Graham she was less involved in the main house productions. Joan was principally recognised as an excellent singer who could give a strong performance, especially in the music hall style. She played for Bill Griffin in the famous Rotary Music Hall at the Campus.

She was also a talented actress who scored some notable hits with the old Welwyn Drama Club and the Thaliens, as well as the Barn. She was in many productions between the 1960s and her last appearance in The Beggar's Opera in 1995. The Drama Club/Folk Players outstanding production of Oh! What a Lovely War! opened on the 50th anniversary of the Armistice on November 11th, 1968, with five ladies in the cast, of which Joan was one. In the new Club's first performance, Fings Ain't Wot They Used T'Be, in October 1969, Joan was in her element as the argumentative cockney Lily Smith. Joan was also playing leading roles for the Welwyn Thaliens, none better than Golde, Tevye's wife in Fiddler on the Roof. Over the next few years, she was in a couple of dozen parts at the Barn, including: a witch in The Wizard of Oz; Chief Weasel in Toad of Toad Hall; the hooker Sandra in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest; Elaine Navazio in Last of the Red Hot Lovers; several roles in The Fosdyke Saga; and both productions of Cabaret. But she will best be remembered for her outstanding performances as blues-belting Mama Morton in Chicago and as the fading alcoholic chanteuse, Evy Meara, in The Gingerbread Lady in 1981. For this production's soundtrack a superb record was made of Joan singing the classic You Made Me Love You, accompanied and arranged by Eric Farlie.

Joan occasionally worked backstage as well, and appeared in many Club nights and cabarets. She always worked hard in rehearsal, and was a great team player. We offer our condolences to Linda and Steve, and to Joan's many friends.

Daphne Barker

Daphne died in April, a few days short of her 80th birthday.

We have no record of Daphne being involved in any of our productions, but she was an enthusiastic supporter of all Club activities, and was a skilful accompanist who helped out at musical events. Her cheerful appreciation of many of the plays and Club nights she attended will be missed.

We extend our condolences to her family and friends

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Maureen Gilmour

Maureen was a regular member of backstage teams for over twenty years. Her first involvement was doing props, a job she favoured more than any other, for Ray Aspey's production of *The Seagull* in 1971. During the 1970s and 80s she worked on over twenty shows, notably Buddug Maxwell's *Salad Days* (1973), Mervyn Lloyd's *Turn of the Screw* and Lesley Keith's *The Merchant of Venice* (1977). By this time she had also tried her hand as a Production Secretary – *Caught Gauguin*, *Bowled Cezanne* (1974), and as a rehearsal pianist – *The Wizard of Oz* (1975).

She served on the Publicity Committee in 1984/5, did a little bit of programme and poster design, and her last entry in the archives is as an A.S.M. for Joan Goodwin's production of *Same Time Next Year*, the winner of Hertford Theatre Week in 1994.

Maureen was the Head Teacher at Thumbswood School. Tall and dignified, with a beautifully cultured voice, she nonetheless had an infectious giggle and a winning smile, and was always a pleasure to work with. Maureen had been a resident in a retirement home in recent years and so had not been able to join us at the Barn very often.

We send our sincere condolences to her family and friends.

Harry Stull

Harry died peacefully on February 6th, aged 91. In recent years a regular supporter of productions and a member of the Front of House team, he was an unassuming, and, for many of our newer members, probably unknown figure at the Barn. Yet his contribution to the development, history and traditions of our Club is immeasurable.

As one of the older members of the editorial team of *Barn News* I am usually asked to compile the obituaries when members pass on. To do this I use the information in the two volumes of the history of the Welwyn Drama Club from 1934 to 1969, compiled by Harry, and the four volumes of the *History of the Barn Theatre Club*, 1969 to 1989, also Harry's work. These comprise a detailed narrative of Club events and personalities, and a full list of all productions and those who were involved in them. (Since 1989 the following volumes, 5, 6 and 7, have been the work of Robert Gill.)

When reading these tomes, one is in awe at the effort and research Harry put into them. Each season's play lists are preceded by a commentary on the season's events.

Finely detailed, perceptive, critical where he felt the need, and generously ensuring that all those involved in any aspect he was reporting were credited by name, these works represent the Club's history.

Harry's first mention of himself in the records is in the 1958 Drama Club production of Present Laughter. From 1958 to 1967 he was the editor of Drama News, the Drama Club's magazine. In the following years he acted in eight of their productions (they did two each year) including Eric Farlie's Romanoff and Juliet (1959) and Louis Davis's Irregular Verb to Love (1964). His late wife, Alice, who appeared only rarely in Barn productions, prompted when Harry appeared in Roar Like a Dove in 1961.

My first effort at the Barn was in the Drama Club's Wrong Side of the Park, fifty years ago this year, and Harry was in the cast. His immediate friendship was warm, undemanding and lasting. He was the BTC Production photographer and his friends were used to receiving calendars at Christmas depicting their dramatic efforts from his collection of photos. When Shirley and I celebrated our Silver Wedding, he sent us a card large enough to hold many pictures of our whole family's involvement at the Barn, and this is framed on my office wall.

His comments in the history of the Club's operations were, of course, published well after the events, but Harry would comment on current aspects of the Club's business by letters to the Chairman, or to the Barn News. I received several of these admonitions, always impeccably polite and beautifully worded but leaving me in no doubt what he thought would have been the proper course of action. These missives were not the ramblings of a grumpy member, but were born of his pride and respect for the dignity of the Club. In the history volumes all aspects of the Barn were recorded, from choice of plays, to rebuilding plans, to dealings with the local authority, to the style of the Barn News, the shortcomings of Council, ticket prices, youth groups, relationships with other societies, power cuts, central heating, and the AGM.

Some examples. In 1970, as the new Club began to find its feet, he referred to a letter in Barn News warning against the dangers of complacency in our standards - "the Club needed to make up its mind if it was a Social Club with an interest in drama or a serious Drama Society with social adjuncts". The following year, with a touch of the undoubted sense of humour with which he could ease his criticism - "One of the lady members of Council spoke with unexpected authority about the state of the gentleman's toilet". In 1974 - "What was described as 'a superior grade of coffee' was offered in the interval - the price was raised to 3p per cup". In 1977 he wrote about the coffee serving arrangements, and words such as shambles, scrum, totally inadequate, makeshift and dangerous had been heard. In 1976 there was an "attempt by Council to satisfy those cynics among the membership who professed a belief that the plays staged at the Barn were chosen by some peculiar rite involving the study of bats' entrails by midsummer moonlight". When Harold Jennings' guide dog, Ivor, died in 1981, Harry wrote: "a well-regarded canine figure who was virtually an honorary Club member! Ivor is affectionately remembered for a well-timed snort, made during one of the speeches at the AGM, which admirably expressed the general feeling of the meeting at that particular moment".

More seriously, with regard for the dignity and reputation of the Club, Harry commented on situations which arose regarding the correct (and incorrect) way to respond to criticism of our artistic efforts, and the pitfalls of altering published

scripts. In addition, he completed a history of the Welwyn Drama Festival.

A gentle and very erudite man, quick to compliment those whose efforts he admired, and not embarrassed to make his opinions known in the right quarter when he felt the Club or particular members were 'letting the side down', Harry's work on the history and reputation of the Club is magnificent. Those of us who have regular access to it as part of our work (Denys and Marion Wells, Archivists, Heather Gill and Denise Duffy, Photo and Programme Archivists, Robert Gill who continues Harry's work, and the Editorial team of Barn News) will never cease to be grateful.

Most of the eighty years of the Barn's existence as a theatre has been brilliantly recorded by Harry. His modesty is revealed by the single entry he gives himself in the last volumes of his work - when he retired from Production Photography in 1984 after twenty-five years in the post.

He signed off his last volume with the epithet "If a farmer fills his barn with grain, he gets mice. If he leaves it empty he gets actors". We offer our condolences to his family and friends, and are eternally grateful for his inspiring work.

(Keith Thompson)

Lilian Allman

We are saddened to record the death of Lilian Allman at the beginning of June.

Her first recorded appearance on the Barn stage was in J.B. Priestley's *I Have Been Here Before*, in January 1947, for the Welwyn Drama Club. During the immediately following years Lilian was involved in almost every production by the Drama Club, either on stage or doing props, as Assistant Director or a backstage crew member, and she was Playreading Secretary, managing to organise nine playreadings, in 1952! She also appeared in several WDC entries at the Welwyn Festival. She became a Committee Member in 1961, and Social Secretary, holding Club parties in her garden. She also took over some box office responsibilities.

In 1968 she gave a memorable performance in Mervyn Lloyd's production of Tennessee Williams's *Something Unspoken*, and later that year was part of a vast props team in Mervyn's 50th Anniversary production of *Oh What a Lovely War*. She played the lead as Madame Cot in the last WDC main house play in April 1969, *Hotel Paradiso*.

After the amalgamation in 1969 and the formation of the Barn Theatre Club, she played in the new Club's first Drama Festival entry as Cynthia in *The Real Inspector Hound*, which won the Festival. The following year she was outstanding, playing opposite Hugh Croydon, as Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, which won the Herts Mercury Cyril Heath Oscar for the Best Play of the year. This was followed by many other roles, including the eponymous *Lysistrata*, as Ruth in *Blithe Spirit* and, in 1974, as Gran in *The Devil in Summer*, another Festival winner.

Still prolific onstage and often available backstage, she was in another Festival winner in 1976 and was elected to the Club Council in 1978. Among other roles, she played: Mrs Candour in *The School for Scandal* (1979); Ethel Thayer in *On Golden Pond* (1987); Madame Arcati in *Blithe Spirit* (1993); and had sessions as Membership Secretary and Housekeeper. She retired from Council in 1995.

A quiet personality but an outstanding actress, with a giggly sense of fun, Lilian was central to the Club's high standards. She cheerfully admitted she couldn't

sing, so kept away from musicals. Very short-sighted, she rehearsed with her glasses on, and said that when she performed without them, she assumed that everything on stage was happening just as it had in rehearsals, as she couldn't see any way! After dropping out of active involvement she continued to support our productions from her flat across the road in Barn Close. She will be missed by many of the older generation of Barn members. We send our condolences to her daughter Patsy and other relatives and friends.

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Clive George

Clive died on July 8th, peacefully, in Lister Hospital. He came to join the Barn via the I.C.I. Dramatic Club, a strong group which performed regularly at the Barn and from which we gained many members. As I do not have access to the I.C.I. archives I can only comment on his work at the Barn, but I remember seeing him in many fine productions for I.C.I.

Clive's first Barn credit is in Carole Muscroft's production of *Toad of Toad Hall* in 1977, as both Alfred the horse and the Judge. His wife Sue was also in the cast. In 1983 he played Jim Beam in *Rose*, and the following year was the Earl of Loam in *The Admirable Crichton*.

He was in the Club's winning entry in the Welwyn Drama Festival in 1985, *Abelard and Heloise*, and later that year in *You Can't Take it With You*. Further performances included Desmond Curry in *The Winslow Boy*, which won at Buxton; a superb portrayal of Frederick Fellowes in *Noises Off* in 1990; and then regular appearances in each season. He sang Matt of the Mint in *The Beggar's Opera* (1995); was the Bishop of Lax in *See How They Run* (1995); Sir Percy Shorter in our second production of *Habeas Corpus* (1996); and several parts in *The Wyrd Sisters* (1999). Three roles in *Julius Caesar* (2000) were followed by a couple of other appearances, and then he decided to call it a day in 2001.

Clive's deep and powerful voice was an asset to any production, and he excelled as a gentleman, usually immaculately turned out and offering superior comments to the other characters. Always easy and pleasant to work with, he was a good team player. We offer our condolences to Sue, and to his friends and family.

Hedy Faulkner

Hedy (Hedone) died in hospital at the beginning of November after a long period of being confined to her home, so we had not seen her at the Barn for quite a while.

Hedy and her late husband Fred (sometime Bar Manager at the Barn) moved to Welwyn Garden in 1983 from North London, where she was a leading player with one of the best musical societies, Hornsey Operatic. Auditioning immediately, she joined the Club, she was cast in Margaret Hakansson's very successful production of Neil Simon's *The Sunshine Boys*, as the homecare nurse seemingly determined to antagonize her patient, Willie Clark. Hedy, having got involved and demonstrated her talents as soon as she arrived at the Barn, was very soon in demand. A trained singer with a warm voice (and proud of her Welsh roots -- *Land of my Fathers* was sung in Welsh at the funeral -- she was cast just six months later as Donna Lucia D'Alvadorez

in *Where's Charley?*, the musical version of *Charley's Aunt*.

A string of performances followed in comedies and musicals, as well as in Mervyn Lloyd's 1985 production of *The Elephant Man*, in which she played three roles: one of the deformed Pinheads in the circus, a Countess and a Nurse. She sang in *Cabaret* in 1986 and also worked on costumes in some productions.

A fine pianist, in 1989 she played on stage as the winter-coated, scarfed and fingerless-gloved accompanist, Mrs. Frazer, with virtually no dialogue yet a significant presence in the tatty church hall dancing class in *Stepping Out*, directed by Shirley Shaw. The next few years saw her with leading roles in *Steel Magnolias*, *The Cemetery Club* and, finally, *Cider with Rosie* in 2003, directed by Eric Chorley and Tiffany While. She also sang with the local Music Hall group, The Barnstormers, for several years.

A talented and enthusiastic performer, Hedy enjoyed the company of her friends at the Barn and, for some years, contributed significantly to productions. The Barn was well represented at her funeral. We send our condolences to her friends and family.

Jo Davies

We received the sad news of the death of Jo in November. The first record we have of Jo's appearance is as Elvira in Mervyn Lloyd's production of *Blithe Spirit* in 1974 and, if my memory serves me, she made her first appearance being flown on to the Barn stage -- a feat of stagecraft rarely accomplished on our low-ceilinged performance space. From then until 2004 Jo appeared in many high-profile roles. Later in 1974 she played Cordelia in Hugh Croydon's *King Lear* and then appeared almost every season. Among many roles in 1977 she was in *Turn of the Screw*; in 1978 *Old Times*; in 1979 *Night of the Iguana*; and in 1981 *The Gingerbread Lady*. After Genet's *The Balcony* in 1981 she turned to directing with Lilian Hellman's controversial play *The Children's Hour*. (1983).

Jo tended to audition for the more intellectually demanding roles such as in *Travesties*, directed by Michael McArdle, in 1985 and the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* in the same year, followed in 1986 by a memorable performance as Queen Elizabeth I in *Vivat, Vivat, Regina*. These were followed by Mistress Overdone in *Measure for Measure* (1986); Mrs. Malapropin *The Rivals* (1988); and the difficult portrayal of the great actress Sarah Bernhardt in *After the Lions* (1989). A superb Dotty Otley, coping with stray sardines, followed in *Noises Off* (1990), and in 1991 she was awarded a Best Actress trophy (jointly with Jan Sayer) at the Luton Festival for her performance in Hugh Croydon's direction of Tennessee Williams's one-acter, *A Perfect Analysis Given by a Parrot*.

As the harridan wife in *A Little Hotel on the Side* she essayed French farce (1992), and also appeared in the enigmatic *Top Girls* (1993) and Glyn Maxwell's two plays at the Barn, *Broken Journey* (1996) and *Anyroad* (2000).

Her final appearance was in the benefit performance of *The Vagina Monologues*, the highly successful 'anti- violence against women and children' one-night event in 2004, directed by Sylvia Pepper as part of the worldwide campaign in 2004, and superbly acted by a cast of three. At various times Jo had worked backstage and in the box office, and had served on Council for three years.

Jo was a quiet, friendly and studious personality, with a soft deep voice often accompanied by a mischievous sparkle in her eyes, but she had a very powerful stage

personality, and one of the finest actresses we have had the privilege of working with. We will miss her.

Wendy Bowen

Wendy died in hospital in Devon at the beginning of December. Husband Rodney was with I.C.I. so it may be that Wendy had appeared at the Barn with the I.C.I. Drama Group before joining the Welwyn Drama Club which is where she first appears in our archives.

After doing the costumes for a couple of plays in 1966 Wendy was cast as Jackie Coryton in Louis Davis's production of *Hay Fever* later that year, and then went on to choreograph the joint musical production by the Folk Players and the Drama Club, *The Wayward Way*, directed by Buddug Maxwell. (By then we had discovered that Wendy had been a professional dancer with the Tiller Girls!) Apart from choreography Wendy worked as a prompter, House Manager, costumier and in props, and for the next few years was involved in several productions each season. She choreographed our first production of *Oh What a Lovely War* which opened on the exact 50th Anniversary of the Armistice in November 1968.

In the spring of 1969, she played the saucy maid Victoire in the Feydeau farce *Hotel Paradiso*, which was the last main house production of the Welwyn Drama Club before the amalgamation and forming of the Barn Theatre Club. In the first season of the new club, she did wardrobe for *Trelawny of the Wells* and soon after was cast in *I Remember Mama* and as Clara Soppitt in *When We Are Married*.

She gave a memorable performance as the poignant Lily Clamacraft in *Alfie* in 1972, and in that year also became a member of Council. More involvement as wardrobe mistress and choreographer (*Salad Days* and our pantomime) followed, and then she excelled as Fay in Joe Orton's *Loot* and as a joyously naturalistic Annie in *Table Manners*.

Wendy had often penned lyrics for Club Night cabarets, and in 1980 she was one of the writers of our staged history of the Garden City, *Hippo on the Doorstep*.

Rodney and Wendy moved to the West country and set up a holiday accommodation business in Stoke-in-Teignhead, and played host to the local Music Hall group, the Barnstormers (of which they had been founder members in 1974), who they invited on a couple of occasions to perform in Devon. Rodney is Chairman of the Teignmouth Drama Festival and friends from Welwyn Garden often visited the performances and stayed with the Bowens.

A lively, bubbly and very sociable friend, Wendy tackled many of the jobs the Club offers to the enthusiast, and will be remembered with great affection by those who worked with her before she went to the West Country. We offer our condolences to Rodney and all the family and her many friends.

Len Price

Len died suddenly a week before Christmas. A man of many talents and interests he was active at the Barn as a set-builder and ASM for a number of productions between 1975 and 1999. But just as they said of Wren 'if you want to see his memorial look around you', the same is true for Len in our theatre. He was a

bricklayer or, in his words, a 'burnt-clay artist'. Much of the updated structure of our building is his work. Most noticeable are the two feature brick walls in the Clubroom, still known to aficionados as 'Len's wall'. He gave his time and energy to the Club on many occasions and over many years. His only brush with show-business was a period spent as a 'bouncer' at Campus West: possessed of a quiet manner but a formidable broken nose he was very effective. He was an active supporter of many Barn productions. His favourite, to each performance of which he travelled all over the country, was the 1988 Festival success *Lone Star*, a Texan tragi-comedy.

He started with the Peartree Boys Club in the 1950s, and was a useful footballer: later in life he took up Judo, gaining a Black Belt. His love of sport reveals two of his proudest moments — getting Mohammed Ali's autograph, and his brother Paul becoming captain of the Welsh football team. The funeral was a tribute to a dearly loved friend. At Harwood Park, the attendance of over 200 could only be accommodated by overflowing into the car park. A lifelong Garden Citizen, he was nonetheless exceptionally proud of his Welsh roots. The chosen music at the beginning was *Myfanwy*, and the glorious sound of the Llanelli Male Voice Choir singing *Land of my Fathers* ended the service.

We send our condolences to all his family and friends. We will miss him.

Ian Armstrong

We sadly record the recent death of Ian Armstrong. Only rarely on our stage he was, nonetheless, a keen supporter of the Club and attended many of our productions.

He came into our orbit via the Welwyn Drama Festival and his award-winning performances with the drama group Flat Four. In the mid 90s he played at the Barn in *Death and the Maiden* and directed *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me*, two powerful dramas with topical political themes. He and Jenny had moved to Witney in Oxfordshire which made them less available, though Jenny was, for a while, the Secretary of the Welwyn Drama Festival.

Ian had three careers: long service with the RAF followed by a period in the City and then as a professional actor, getting roles in provincial productions and understudying in the West End. Always friendly and interested in what other members were achieving, he was good company.

We send our condolences to Jenny and Alison, and his family and friends.

Sylvia Pepper

It is with great sadness that we report the death on 9th July of Sylvia Pepper, after a long and courageous battle against cancer. Sylvia first appeared on the Barn stage as Blanche in *Widowers' Houses* in January 1973; she both acted and worked backstage in several other productions in the early seventies, but then found herself in constant demand as Production Secretary, where she soon gained a reputation as one of the most reliable and effective people that the Barn had ever used in that vital function.

Although that role didn't really stretch her considerable theatrical abilities, it was not until 1990 that she eventually plucked up the courage to direct a play, *Random Moments In a May Garden*, by James Saunders. Leaving aside productions in which she was either Co-Director or Assistant Director, at the Barn she directed twelve in

all; the last one was *The History Boys*, by Alan Bennett, which was performed in July 2010. John Davies said at her funeral on 21st July: "That was undoubtedly the most enjoyable production I've ever acted in, and I'm pretty sure that view is shared by every one else involved in it. She took the job very seriously, and worked as hard at it as we had come to expect, but she also regarded it as great fun, and that attitude communicated itself to the rest of us."

Keith Thompson also remembers her as a director – he writes: 'Her production of Stoppard's *Arcadia* was a master- class in untangling and presenting a wonderful script, and her direction was enjoyed with admiration and fascination by all involved. She also assisted me in my first venture into Sondheim, in *Assassins*, where her opinions were of great value to us all.'

The greatest contribution she made to the success of the Barn was, however, in the selection of plays and directors for the forthcoming season; first as Chair of the Play Selection Committee, then later as Artistic Director. That's the most difficult job in any theatre, and she filled it for many years with enormous success. She showed exceptionally reliable judgement, not just of the artistic value of a play but also of its likely box office success, and of its suitability for whichever Director it was that wanted to do it. She brought that judgement to bear when she spent a year as a lay member of the Olivier Award panel, when she could get tickets at short notice for any West End production, and would share this bounty with her Barn friends accompanying her.

For the many friends who visited her during her three-and-a-half-year struggle against malignant melanoma, the most enduring memory will surely be of the quite extraordinary courage she displayed in the face of an illness that she knew from the start was going to be fatal. She resolved to make the most of what life remained to her, volunteered to take part in several trials of new drugs, and continued her duties as a GCSE examiner long after most people would have given up.

To all her friends, and to David, Harrold, Barry, Tom and Anna, we extend our deepest sympathy.

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Bernadine Palomeque

We have just heard the sad news of the death of Bernardine Palomeque. In her maiden name of Stoye she appeared in the first play at the Barn after the outbreak of the war, for the Welwyn Drama Club, in November 1939, and managed to play Lady Teazle in *The School for Scandal* in April 1940 just before the theatre was closed for the duration.

She resumed her stage appearances in 1947 and was a regular performer with the Drama Club from then until the formation of the Barn Theatre Club in 1969, also directing main house and festival plays. Highlights included Amanda Wingfield in Eric Farlie's 1959 production of *The Glass Menagerie*, and two parts for which, with her tall and elegant bearing and beautiful spoken word she was ideal; the Reverend Mother in *A Letter for the General*, directed by Ron Jolly in 1965, and Lady Lurewell in *The Constant Couple* in 1971 for the Barn. She appeared in the last play performed by the Drama Club in 1969, and in two plays in the first season of the newly formed

Barn Theatre Club. In the latter part of this period, she played in her married name of Bradshaw.

After the death of her husband Derek, who was also a Barn backstage regular, she married Carlos Palomeque and they spent much of their time travelling on adventurous holidays, so regrettably we saw less of her at the Barn. She did, however, triumph at the Minack Theatre for the Hertfordshire Players in 1974 as the dominant evil millionairess, Clare Zachanassian, in Durrenmatt's *The Visit*, and made one more memorable appearance for the Barn as the Abbess in the 1985 Festival winner *Abelard and Heloise*.

Disabled by failing sight in her later years she nonetheless kept in touch with many of her Barn friends from her home in Stevenage. We offer our condolences to her family and friends.

Simon Turner

Simon Turner died in late September and his funeral at Sherwood Forest Crematorium was conducted by his friend and ex Barn Member Val Turner who now lives in Shipley and is a Humanist Celebrant. The Barn was well represented at the ceremony and Steve Thompson delivered part of the eulogy, and John Cook read the lines from *The Tempest* 'our revels now are ended.' just before the Committal.

Having sampled amateur drama at Watford Grammar School Simon joined the National Youth Theatre at 15 as a lighting designer. Our late member Derek Ritchie had recently acquired Festival Workshop, a theatrical hire company (and forerunner of our own Festival Costumes) and employed Simon in the school holidays to service the lighting and sound equipment and assist with shows and musicals all over the country. From there Simon joined Derek's company *The Interluders* for productions at The Minack Theatre in the late 1960's, and then on to lighting for The Hertfordshire Players and *Shattered Windscreen* at The Minack and the Edinburgh Festival.

Simon was a chemistry teacher in local schools where he also was Head of the Theatre Studies Department and successfully directed many shows and musicals.

At the Barn he was in charge of the Youth Theatre and his achievements here were remarkable. He organised summer workshops (*Dream 82*) where a play was rehearsed in a week and presented on the last night, and directed two youth productions as part of the main house programme. *Oliver* in 1982 and *Godspell* in 1984 were both the best-selling shows of the season, and of the eleven young actors who appeared in the latter eight of them went on to work in the profession. As Steve said at the funeral, Simon was the catalyst and the driving force. He inspired a generation of actors and arts professionals. He was a passionate, stubborn, demanding perfectionist.

He made his mark in our regular programme directing *Antony and Cleopatra* in 1994 which won the Felixstowe Festival and he was awarded the Best Director prize, and with *Romeo and Juliet* in 1985. Apart from these successes he was the lighting or sound designer and operator for many of our productions.

Simon and his partner Hamilton moved away to Newark in 2006, and became Civil Partners later that year, which they converted to marriage last year. Sadly by then he had been diagnosed with cancer, and was only 65 when he died.

We extend our deepest sympathy to Hamilton, and Simon will be missed by the many friends whose lives he touched.

Marjorie Coles

We have received the sad news that Marjorie passed away on September 19th. She was in her late nineties.

Her local theatre involvement was principally with the Welwyn Thaliens, but in the 1970's , before she and Frank moved away to Lancashire, she acted in four productions for the Barn, and directed two main house plays and several one-act productions. She was regularly involved backstage doing costume and make-up. Her flair was for Christmas productions, with music, and in January 1975 she presented *The Wizard of Oz*, a year after she had directed *The Owl* and *the Pussycat Went to Sea*.

As an actress she had played Mme Alvarez in *Gigi* in our very first season in 1969 and made a handful of other stage appearances, but it was as a costume and make-up specialist that she contributed most in a dozen other plays. Coincidentally her last involvement at the Barn was doing costumes for Mervyn Lloyd's production of *The Turn of the Screw* in March 1977 which is the same Henry James story as *The Innocents* which is our upcoming November production.

Although we had seen very little of her for some years, she will be well remembered by older Barn members, and we send our condolences to her relatives and friends

Anthony Gordon

Anthony died in November after a long illness which robbed us of his company for several years. An accomplished tenor, he played leading roles for many local companies.

He first appeared at the Barn in the Sondheim musical *Assassins* in 2001 playing the killer of U.S. President McKinley. His accomplished singing performance, was a highlight of the production. He subsequently appeared as Mr. Dorilant in *The Country Wife* (2002), Reece in *Communicating Doors* (2003) and Turkey/Greylag the goose in the Christmas musical *Honk*.

An affable and knowledgeable companion and a dedicated member of any cast, we enjoyed his company. Our sincere condolences are offered to Natalie and Ben, his children Jo and Simon and all his friends

Megan Brogan

As we went to print the very sad news arrived that Megan Brogan, the daughter of Lisa Wilson and step-daughter to Lisa's husband Steve, was killed in a road accident in Bristol where she was visiting her Dad.

Megan was an active youth member, including an appearance in *Aladdin* in 2000, directed by her grandmother Margaret Hakansson, and she still lived locally, working at The North Star pub in Oaklands.

We send our condolences to Lisa, Steve, Margaret and Joan and their families.

Cheryl Luxford

We are sorry to have heard of the death last month of Cheryl Luxford, who worked in our Wardrobe Team for a while in the recent past.

David Thompson

We were sad to hear of the death of David Thompson ('the older') at the end of April, in a nursing home in Harpenden where he had been living in recent years. After a career as a School Inspector, David came to the Club around 1990 and was soon directing plays (ten in all over the years) including *Steel Magnolias* (1992), *Single Spies* (1992), and particularly successful productions of *Racing Demon* (1996) and *Bedroom Farce* (1999). He worked many times as a set builder and occasionally decided to act as well, the last time in 2008 as a member of the U-Boat crew in *Dad's Army*.

A gentle and genial companion, David was always interested in the Club's activities, and was a knowledgeable theatre buff. He served on Council as Marketing Director for several years. As regular sup-porters of many of the Club's events, David and Sybil made a wide circle of friends here.

David will be missed and we send our deepest condolences to Sybil and the family.

Mary Anderson

Mary had lived her whole life in Welwyn Garden City. I know little of her early life except that she went to City of London School and had worked as a Land Girl at Brickwall Farm before joining Hambro's Bank in the City of London.

She is first noted in the Archives in the Welwyn Drama Club production of *Lady Precious Stream* in 1948. Although on stage perhaps only half a dozen times during her long membership of the Drama Club and the Barn Theatre Club, she notably took over, from her job as prompter, the role of Aunt Mildred in the N.F.Simpson play *One Way Pendulum* when the actress who was cast was taken ill just before the first night in 1967.

She was Secretary of the Drama Club for two years from 1951. Mary regularly worked as a prompter and programme seller, with a bit of wardrobe and stage management work as well, and although not taking any formal jobs after 1986 was, until last year, when she was taken ill, a regular member of the Wardrobe Team that meets on Monday and Tuesday mornings. With her extensive knowledge of Garden City history, she was a researcher for the Club's history production *Hippo on the Doorstep* in 1980.

A keen member and a supporter of much of the Club's work, Mary was a lively and dependable companion. We offer our condolences to her family and friends.

Nora Jackson

We're sad to announce that Nora Jackson, one of the stalwarts of the play-reading group, and great supporter of the Barn, passed away at the end of May. Yvana, who got to know Nora through the play readings said:

"She was such a positive and supportive member of the group and I will miss her

laughter and her interest in what everyone was doing. She always commented on the main stage plays with insight and humour. She had come to us after many years with the Thaliens and loved coming to the Barn shows. She was very proud to introduce friends to the drama scene in Welwyn Garden City.”

(Yvana Reeves)

SEASON 2016 – 2017

James Maxwell

Jim Maxwell died on Sunday 18th September. A lifelong member of the Barn, he had joined the Welwyn Drama Club having been a member of the I.C.I. Drama Club, which performed at the Barn with such success in the period before the Barn Theatre Club was formed in 1969.

His first appearance with the Drama Club was in *A Letter from the General* in the production by his wife, Buddug (Beth), in 1965, and he also played in the Festival in 1966. After the amalgamation in 1969 he played in the new Club's first Welwyn Festival entry, as Birdboot in Mervyn Lloyd's outstanding winner *The Real Inspector Hound*. In over twenty appearances over the next thirty-odd years he was outstanding as Colonel Melkett in *Black Comedy* in 1972; in another Festival winner, Joan Goodwin's production of *Marble Arch*, the following year; the Headmaster in *40 Years On*, for which his impeccable diction and imperious manner were perfect; and he then effectively switched character to play the libidinous and frustrated Doctor Arthur Wicksteed in our first production of *Habeas Corpus* in 1980.

Other significant successes were Prospero in *The Tempest* in 1984; Amundsen in *Terra Nova* in 1993; and, with genial pomposity, a perfectly realised Herbert Soppitt in *When We Are Married*, in 1994.

As the troubled ex-Nazi conductor Furtwangler in *Taking Sides* (1999) he was again perfectly cast, resisting American interrogation over his actions during the war. In 2000 he had the opportunity to appear in his son Glyn's play *Anyroad*, and over the next three years he gave strong performances in *Arcadia*, *Quartet* and *Gaslight*.

Jim's wife Beth, who had been in the profession when they first met, has been a regular director at the Barn and Jim appeared in several of her plays. His eldest son Glyn is a very successful poet and playwright, and his other sons, Alun and David, have also trodden the boards here on many occasions.

Jim was for many years the Chairman at the Campus Olde Tyme Music Hall, a role for which his sense of humour and wide-ranging vocabulary were ideal, delivering withering put-downs with a sparkle in his eye.

Over the years a major contributor to our reputation, with well thought out and realised performances, Jim was also great company in rehearsals. A proud Liverpudlian (his grandfather was a founder member of Everton Football Club) he could be relied upon to bring quality to any production.

We offer our sincere condolences to Beth, Glyn, Alun and David and their families.

Iris Marshall

We have heard the sad news of the death of Iris last month. She had been in poor health for a while and died in a local nursing home.

Cheerful and enthusiastic, Iris first became involved with the Barn in 1989 doing props for Season's Greetings, and she had obviously found the niche that suited her for she did this same vital backstage job with her friend Jean Amato in no fewer than twenty-five productions over the next nine years. Her skills were put to good use in such diverse plays as the trenches of Journey's End, the Austrian court of Amadeus, the two roomed set of Run for your Wife, the stews of The Beggar's Opera and the fantasy of The BFG.

Her only venture onto the stage to perform was in 1992 in the Christmas production A Little Hotel on the Side, where with several other girls in Victorian bloomers she scampered from a hotel room when the police arrived.

Always fun to work with, Iris gave us the impression that she valued our company as much as we enjoyed hers. We send our condolences to her family and friends

Tina Jolly

Tina's recent death, after a period of illness which did not keep her away from the Barn, was recognised by a gathering at the Barn after the service attended by a large crowd of friends and family.

Under her maiden name Goode, she first appears in the archives as a last-minute stand-in prompt for the production of One Way Pendulum for the Welwyn Drama Club in 1967. She was then involved in various backstage roles and also appeared on stage in Still Life, Billy Liar and the Welwyn Drama Club's final production, Hotel Paradiso, in 1969. At this time, she was also Secretary of the Club.

After the formation of the Barn Theatre Club, she continued to be regularly filling onstage and backstage roles, as a consequence of which she met Brian, her future husband who was lighting these shows, and worked for Director Ron Jolly, her new father-in-law. Then there is quite a gap in the archives until 1994 which I imagine was due to bringing up her two boys, Nigel and Martyn, the latter of whom keeps up their long family connection with our theatre, now further extended by Tina's granddaughter Flora. Apart from assisting on many productions, Tina organised theatre trips, and regularly managed the catering for club events. She appeared on stage again in a couple of small parts in Dad's Army and The Ladykillers, but to newer members she will be remembered as a willing and helpful organizer, frequently at the centre of social gatherings at the Barn. Cheerful, noisy, friendly and enjoying herself when working hard, she was a tribute to her 'Barn family'.

We offer our condolences to the family and her friends, and we know she will be greatly missed by all of us.

Lynn Gill

On 21st May Lynn Gill (now Dalloway), former wife of Robert Gill, was found dead in her Leicester home where she lived alone following the death of her second husband Phil Dalloway. The cause of her death is unknown at present, and her funeral took place on 6th June in Leicester.

Members will remember Lynn who first appeared at the Barn in 1971 as one of the 'Brodie Girls' in The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie directed by Carole Muscroft.

(Robert Gill)

Irene Gill

Our first record for Irene in the archives is for wardrobe in a production in 1972. The following year she played Linda in *Death of a Salesman*, a demanding role which established her as an actress who, though an infrequent visitor to our stage, could be relied upon to perform some of the most outstanding characters. In 1973 she played Mrs Frank in *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and two years later astonished us as the dominant and cruel Mum who terrified her family from behind her eyepatch in *The Anniversary*.

Regular involvement back-stage in a variety of jobs for some years was eventually interrupted by another startling transformation into Big Mama in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, and then, soon after, Clairee in *Steel Magnolias*, Mrs Northrop in *When We Are Married* and Lil in *Kindertransport*.

Husband Neil was a major figure in our theatre as actor and Chairman, but his premature death in 1999 denied them of the retirement they would have enjoyed together. Since then, Irene still actively and regularly worked on our productions in costume, prompting and props.

Always a delightful companion with a light humour and a friendly interest in other members' families, she enjoyed her recent efforts in the very sociable morning wardrobe team. Son Chris followed in his parents' footsteps onto our stage; son Tim is a professional cellist; and granddaughter Doraly is a keen member of our Youth Theatre. Irene and Neil also played at the Minack Theatre with the Hertfordshire Players in the 90s.

Despite the onset of the problems of age, Irene remained a bright and lively friend. We will all miss her.

We offer our sympathy to Chris and Tim and the family, and her many friends.

SEASON 2017 – 2018

Sheila Izzard

Sheila died in the Lister hospital in early September as the result of a traffic accident in July. Sheila was a keen and enthusiastic supporter of Barn productions for many years – certainly more than 40 – and, with her family, always enjoyed them. Although never a member of the Club, she was a regular visitor during the season.

Agnelo Menezes

Agnelo several years ago through his work at the Barn. He was always excellent company, good fun, helpful and very reliable and also a very private individual. He was one of those unsung heroes that organisations depend on to function, someone who simply got on and did things, quietly and efficiently. I asked Agnelo if he would join Tiger Theatre as our stage manager for the touring festival shows and he did a great job. While we, the actors, were often flustered and disorganised he would quietly get on with getting things sorted out and, making sure that everything was where it needed to be. We managed to get the entire show, set, props, crew and cast into one car: happy days indeed.

Agnelo once even fell off quite a high stage at one of our many festival performances but he literally brushed himself off and carried on. He was a kind, generous and

thoughtful man, I along with a lot of other people at the Barn will miss him greatly.
Thanks Agnelo. Rest in peace

(Bob Thomson)

Shirley Austin

Shirley died at home on 1st June. Originally with the ICI Dramatic Society, her first appearance in our records is doing artwork for the production of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* in 1971 and again in 1973 for *Salad Days*. She only made two stage appearances, as the Washerwoman in the 1977 *Toad of Toad Hall*, and in the ensemble of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* in 1978.

Most of her considerable artistic talent was used for set design, scene painting and poster design. She was also responsible for the special foyer décor for our World War II revue *Put That Light Out*, in 1977. Her last involvement with the Club was in 1991, but as a supporter of our plays she was with us earlier this year.

A willing and helpful member of any stage team that required her particular artistic talent, Shirley had a quiet but memorable sense of humour and was a pleasure to work with. We shall miss her.

We send our condolences to her family and friends.

Gill Millinger

We received the news of Gill's death in May. Originally a member of the ICI Dramatic Society, her first appearance with the Barn was in 1971 in the cast of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. Subsequently Gill spent more time in backstage roles as an ASM, prompt or property mistress, though she made a memorable appearance as part of the quartet of witches in *Dark of the Moon* in 1975. She was in the crew of some of our most significant festival plays, including *Dracula* (1980) and *The Dresser* (1983).

Gill remained an active member until her last involvement, as ASM for *Aladdin* in 2000. In more recent year's health problems prevented her from working on plays, but she remained a regular supporter. Always a serious and conscientious member of a crew, she was a pleasure to work with. We send our condolences to her many friends at the Barn.

Denys Wells

We received news of the death of Denys in May. Working with I.C.I. in the town, he had been active with their group and also the Welwyn Folk Players, lighting two of the joint productions with the Welwyn Drama Club in 1965 and 1966 (*Maria Marten* and *The Wayward Way*) which were the immediate precursors of the amalgamation of the two clubs.

With the Barn he worked solely as a lighting man, and between October 1970 and November 1990 lit over 20 productions. In 1990 he and his wife Marion took over the duties of Club Archivist for several years. For many years Marion was responsible for the distribution of *Barn News* (often by bicycle).

Denys served as Treasurer to the Club from 1977 until 1987 and, together with Louis Davis, negotiated the purchase of the freehold of the building from the New Towns Commission over many months, and it finally became our property in 1984. Denys

also built our first electronic lighting switchboard.

A quiet and serious companion, Denys was a valuable member of the crew of any production with which he was involved. In recent years Marion's health afforded him less opportunity to work at the Barn, but he remained a regular visitor.

We send our sincere condolences to Marion and their friends and relatives.

SEASON 2018 – 2019

Pheobe Johnson

Pheobe died at the beginning of October. First credited in 1974 as part of the wardrobe team for *King Lear*, she remained as a regular member of the backstage team, mostly in costumes but occasionally for props, until 2003, with her involvement in *Gaslight*. During these years she worked backstage for over 20 productions.

In the early 1980s her son Ben appeared in youth productions. Phoebe was a regular member of the wardrobe team that works during the day on Mondays and Tuesdays, and also did front-of-house coffee until earlier this year. She attended every production as an audience member.

Thorough and reliable in everything she volunteered for, she was a quiet but amiable companion to all her friends at the Barn. We send our sincere condolences to her family.

Ron Claxton

Ron died last month after a long illness. Well-known to the older generation of Barn members but less so to newer members because he was rarely involved in recent productions, Ron had been a member since the formation of the Barn Theatre Club in 1969. For the Welwyn Drama Club he had built sets from 1964 onwards. Judith has always been an onstage member but certainly during the 1970s their children Sarah, Ian and Andrew were also involved in plays.

A keen supporter of Barn events, Ron was especially noticeable in front-of-house duties in recent years, and was a voice of authority in matters of procedure and correctness in Club affairs.

An electrical engineer by profession, his skills were of use during development of the Barn building's fabric over the years (and he was proud of his National Service as an Electrical Officer in the Navy, during which he sailed to the Falkland Islands). In recent years he had spent considerable time working as Treasurer for the Friendship House Day Centre.

We shall miss him, and we send our deepest condolences to Judith and his family and friends.

Margaret Hakansson

We sadly recorded the death of Margaret Hakansson in the January issue. Margaret came to the Club in 1976, and was soon cast in a range of leading roles which clearly demonstrated her versatility as an actress – *Move Over Mrs Markham*, *Oh Glorious Jubilee* (a musical), *Old Times* and *Night of the Iguana*. In 1983 she directed for us for the first time with *The Sunshine Boys*, and continued to present a wide range of

drama up to her last effort for us, *Aladdin* in 2000. Apart from her skills on stage she undertook prompting, ASM work, running the Youth Theatre (known then as the Barn Juniors) including directing entries for the YDF and, with Maryam Rodway, organising very entertaining Club Nights: for a number of years, they organised a Club Christmas Dinner in the bar. She was also on Council for several years. Running play readings was a regular part of her involvement as well.

Margaret is probably best remembered for dramatic performances such as Miss Cooper in *Separate Tables* (1991) and Mary, Queen of Scots in *Vivat, Vivat, Regina* (1986). Her skills, talent and enthusiasm made her a most valuable member of the Barn. Regretfully we had not seen much of her at the Barn in recent years. We offer our condolences to her family and friends.

Rodney Bowen

Rodney died on Easter Sunday, at his retirement apartment in Devon. Although not involved at the Barn for nearly 40 years, he was very much part of the Club at its inception. He started at the Barn doing lighting for a Welwyn Drama Club production in 1965 and then ventured on stage in the joint musical productions with the Folk Players in 1966, *An Italian Straw Hat* and *The Wayward Way*, and *Oh What a Lovely War* in 1968. These efforts combining the resources of both clubs were instrumental in the eventual amalgamation in 1969. Rodney was also on the WDC committee.

In the Barn Theatre Club's inaugural season Rodney was Stage Manager for *The Killing of Sister George*, and directed a festival play in 1970. His last part was in *Everything in the Garden* in 1974. Work commitments overtook him but his wife Wendy was still active until her last appearance for the Club in *Picnic* in 1982.

They moved to Devon and started a holiday rental complex near Teignmouth, and then after many successful years there retired and moved to nearby Shaldon. With the Teignmouth Players they were involved in the summer productions in which one of their plays played every Thursday night (the same play for the whole summer) in the Teignmouth Pierhead Theatre, for the summer visitors. Rodney was also Chairman of the Teignmouth Drama Festival. They were always ready to welcome old Garden City friends to stay with them, and also invited the Barnstormers Music Hall to play in the Shaldon Village Hall.

Apart from being a shrewd businessman Rodney was enthusiastic and hardworking, and very good company. He imparted his easygoing style to everyone he worked with, and was deservedly successful. Most of the 'older' generation of Barn members will have enjoyed his company at some time, and although he chose to live elsewhere for so many years he kept in touch with all his friends.

We send our condolences to Andrew, Mark and Tim and their families, and to Rodney's many friends.

Eric Farlie

According to Pam, Eric's entry into amateur drama was as follows. Pam had joined the I.C.I. Dramatic Club and was at work, discussing with the director of their next play, Thos. E. Symes, her role as Assistant Stage Manager. Thos. stated he was looking for someone to play the leading role, Witch Boy, in their forthcoming production of *Dark of the Moon*, when Eric, not an acquaintance of either of them,

walked past the window. Thos. Shouted 'He's the one' and they persuaded Eric to take the part, his first acting role.

Eric's father was a regular soldier in the Royal Horse Artillery who had fought in the battle of the Somme in 1916, in charge of Number 1 Gun. Later posted to Newport in South Wales, Eric was born there in 1929. After his father had left the army they subsequently moved to Cambridge. Eric did his National Service in the RAF and then rejoined ICI in Welwyn Garden City. The ICI Dramatic Club were regular players at the Barn as also were the Welwyn Drama Club, and Eric joined the latter in 1957. His first job that year was lighting *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and he soon tried his hand at set design in 1959 with *The Mystery of the Mary Celeste*. Also, that year he tried his hand at directing with *Romanoff and Juliet*, in which, discovering the problem faced by all directors, that of filling the bit parts, he cast himself as A Layabout. He was appointed to the Committee. A string of designs followed including the famous joint production with the Welwyn Folk Players of *Oh What a Lovely War* which opened on the 50th Anniversary of the Armistice on 11th November 1968.

The Drama Club and the Folk Players amalgamated in 1969 to form The Barn Theatre Club, increasing the number of plays produced. This gave him the opportunity to design several sets each season, and also help with set building and do the lighting for many productions, sometimes doing all three jobs on the same play, and often working with Pam. In his 'spare time' he was Stage Director, overseeing all productions, and also revamped the kitchen and toilets. In 1983 his set for the festival one-act play *Erpingham Camp* won the Stage Decor Award in the All-England Final, and in 1984 he designed the set for *27 Wagons Full of Cotton*, which won the English Final.

Eric's set designs were quite simply often masterpieces of detail and accuracy. He was involved from 1969 until January this year in over 180 productions at the Barn and designed sets at least 80 times. Examination of the current exhibition of a dozen of his set models in the Clubroom reveals the detail to which his patience must have contributed. Directors with whom he worked were fed useful information and artistic ideas. Potential difficulties were discussed and overcome, or altered.

John Davies writes: 'Eric was a magician. *The Lady in the Van* was at first sight impossible to perform at the Barn; how on earth could one back a van onto the stage, then paint it a different colour during the interval? Eric looked at the script, and thought he might be able to solve the problem. That was reassurance enough for me to offer the play, and then of course he made a careful scale drawing of the solution, put in a vast amount of personal effort helping to build it, and made the trick work. An amazing man.'

Eric served as Chairman of the Club from 1986 to 1992. Other offices he filled were, at various times, Technical Director, Productions Director, Stage Director and Services Director, and Council Member. He prepared *The Rough Guide*, outlining the processes all productions need to go through. He worked on occasions with other companies, the Campus Rotary Music Hall, the Barnstormers Music Hall, and the Hertfordshire Players at the Minack Theatre in Cornwall, as well as on school productions when he was a teacher at Onslow School.

His papers on our approach to submission for a Lottery Grant, and the detail of the reasons for our failure to achieve this, and its likely effect on the Club's future, are superb examples of well-ordered research. No other member knew as much about

this building, or contributed as much time and practical effort to its upkeep and development as Eric. He had redesigned and redeveloped the foyer twice, 20 years apart.

Eric was a man of strong opinions, but not confrontational, so we only realised this if the conversation happened to alight on one of his pet subjects. Essentially Eric was a quiet person, friendly, and excellent company. Dependability was one of his overriding qualities. No one other member will be able to fill the vacancy left by his departure.

We offer our condolences to Pam, and David, Richard and Alan and their families. Just as we will find it difficult to fill the inevitable gap in our lives, so the Club will have to learn to replace his work.

SEASON 2019 – 2020

Joan Goodwin

Joan died at the end of August. She had been a member for over 40 years, her first appearance here being in 1970, and her debut as a director for us being with *Barefoot in the Park* in 1971. Although she played a wide range of character roles her forte was as a director, and she made a strong impression with an excellent production of *The Miracle Worker* in 1972. During the 1970s her work included *The Diary of Anne Frank* in 1973 and a hugely enjoyable review of World War Two material and music, *Put That Light Out*, compiled and written by her friend, the late John Gardiner.

At that time the Club was only entering the Welwyn Drama Festival with its one-act offerings, but Joan's effort and enthusiasm took us into the All-England Festival with the unlikely piece *Willow, Woe is Me*, a verse play about cricket. It won the All-England prize at Stockport and the All-Winners Festival at Fleetwood. This success began a period of Barn entries in the national competitions which led to other award-winning productions by other directors for the Club, and Joan must take some credit for beginning this involvement.

Later full-length efforts by Joan included *Daisy Pulls it Off* (1991), *September in the Rain*, (2003) and *Comic Potential* (2006), and her last production was *Blood Brothers* in 2010. She continued to work as a prompt until 2014.

With a detailed theatrical knowledge and an appetite for hard work, Joan was a tough taskmaster but these qualities ensured that her work here generated a long run of successful productions. Her late husband John was often involved as a set builder and designer.

We send our condolences to their son Adam and her family and friends.

John Walters

John died on 6th September, in a nursing home, after a long illness. A regular supporter of our plays, he was also frequently involved in set construction with occasional forays into set design. From 1985 until 2004 his name appears in the records 25 times as part of the set building team. He worked on such complex sets as

the multiple hotel room set for *A Little Hotel on the Side* in 1992, in which farce his wife Sue made one of her infrequent appearances on stage as a hotel guest.

Other outstanding sets on which he worked included the country house interior in our first production of *Arcadia* (2001) and the fully working kitchen in *Skylight* (2008). His designs were seen, among others, in *Hobson's Choice* (1998) and *Gaslight* (2003). Quiet and unassuming, John was nonetheless excellent company, with a fine line in self-deprecating humour, and he will be missed by his many friends at the Barn.

We send our sincere condolences to Sue and his friends and family.

Jon Ormerod

Jon died just before Christmas after a long illness. A long-time member, together with others he was involved in the rebuilding of parts of the bar and toilets, and also in set building. In recent years he was most likely to be encountered in the bar on a Friday evening reminiscing with his friends. He was a genial character and very good company.

The funeral was on 16th January in Hitchin. At the service Ian Colpitts read from the humorous works of Gerard Hoffnung, a particular favourite of Jon's. We send our condolences to Jon's friends and family.

Ann Richie

Ann Ritchie died on Easter Sunday in Elizabeth House. In the recent past she had been one of the 'ladies who lunch', a small group of Barn friends who met regularly in The Horns, and she also often spent Sunday lunchtime in the Club bar with the select group of crossword aficionados.

Ann had been a member of the Welwyn Drama Club and the Folk Players in the 1960s and their archives show she worked backstage as ASM on *Maria Marten* (1965) and *An Italian Straw Hat* (the 1966 joint production). A year later she worked on sound on *One-Way Pendulum*.

By this time her future husband Derek had founded the Interluders specifically to perform at the Minack Theatre in Cornwall and they had appeared there in the four years from 1964 onwards. After their 1969 production Derek and Ann married, and started a successful service business in north-east Spain, handing the Interluders to Keith Thompson and Denis Butcher, who renamed the company the Hertfordshire Players. While in Spain Derek and Ann were visited by many of their Hertfordshire friends and were very generous hosts. When they wound the company down and returned to this country over 20 years later, they chose to live in Scotland, on the shores of Loch Lomond, but missing the allure of amdram they soon returned to the Garden City. Derek became Facilities Director of the Barn, and Ann spent a period as Company Secretary. They eventually returned briefly to Spain, where Derek died, and this brought Ann back to the Barn. Last year ill-health dictated that she had to reside in Elizabeth House, and we did not see her at the Barn again.

We send our condolences to her friends and relatives. Although her absence abroad meant she was not well known to the current members, she played a significant role in the local dramatic scene. Friendly and knowledgeable, Ann was a good friend and efficient and reliable in her chosen roles with the companies with which she was involved.

Mark Crampton

Mark died in the first week of June. He had been battling with a troublesome illness for some time.

His involvement as a Barn member was in two spells. From 2002 until 2005 he appeared in six plays, most notably as Philip Grimshaw in *All in Vein* (2002), *The Boss in Of Mice and Men* (2004) and *Crabtree in 'Allo 'Allo!* (2005). He also tried his hand as a Stage Manager for *Over the River and Through the Woods*.

Mark had been in the police service since 1976, retiring as a Chief Inspector (Traffic – M1 and M25 mostly) after a two-year secondment to Bermuda in a training role. While in the Force he ran a disco, *Skidmark*, and excelled as a DJ.

He reappears in the archives in 2014, as Production Manager for *The Accrington Pals*, then in 2017 playing three parts in *One Man, Two Guvnors*, and a small part in *A Chorus of Disapproval*. His last production was managing *Kindertransport* last year.

A tall, commanding figure with a strong voice, Mark was at his best in roles requiring a 'presence'. Offstage he was good company, and often helped out behind the bar.

We offer our condolences to his family, to his children Sarah and Benjie, and to his many friends at the Barn. We shall miss him, both as a friend and a valued contributor to our productions.

Colin Timney

We have recently received the sad news that Colin Timney passed away this week after a brave fight with illness. He was a long-time Barn member and a stalwart of the set-building team. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him. Our thoughts are with his family and friends

Pam Farlie

Pam died on 6th December.

In the Welwyn Drama Club, before the formation of the Barn Theatre Club, Eric Farlie is first mentioned lighting a production in 1957. After a flirtation with FOH jobs, Pam assisted Eric with lighting in many productions for the Drama Club.

In the period immediately after the amalgamation in 1969 Pam started as ASM for *Fings Ain't Wot They Used T'Be*, the inaugural show. Forming a lighting duo to accompany Eric's many set designs, she was involved in 34 productions in 10 years. They seemed ever-present, available, skilful and made useful suggestions to directors. Their enthusiasm can be deduced, for example, in the early summer of 1983: at the Barn they lit the spoof cartoon strip *The Fosdyke Saga* in March, *The Dresser* in April and Joe Orton's farce *Erpingham Camp* for the Welwyn Festival in June. These latter two went on to play on consecutive evenings in Northampton and Buxton festivals, winning both, and playing in other locations during the month. Pam and Eric lit both, as well as their commitments to the Campus Music Hall and the occasional one-night stands of *The Barnstormers*. Quietly professional, they were inevitably in demand, not only because of their theatre skills but because they were a pleasure to work with. They were involved in many festivals and won a plethora of stage presentation awards.

Pam also tried her hand at stage management, very successfully. She was a quiet but firm presence. Once, when we were taking a set down on a Sunday morning, and well aware of my lack of handyman abilities, she put a hammer in my hand and said

‘Do as little damage as possible!’.

The list of productions in which she was involved, often but not always with Eric, dominates large sections of the archives. Also, the archives reveal that at some time, all four of their children were involved in Barn activities. Even their choice of abode seemed Barn-oriented: their three successive houses moved closer to the Barn over the years, ending on the doorstep in Barnside. They were also with The Interluders / Hertfordshire Players from the outset in 1964.

Pam seemed a quiet personality but had a ready wit and a firm opinion. She enjoyed the social side of club affairs and the company of other members. Highly knowledgeable on theatrical matters technical, she was not afraid to air her opinions of the club’s productions. Her last outing was assisting with set construction for *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice* in 2003.

We send our condolences to the family and her many friends. It’s easy to say that the Barn will not seem the same without her, but it’s true. We had not seen much of her for a couple of years as her health declined, but we will miss her in so many ways.

SEASON 2020 - 2021

Andrew Powell (I)

We have just received news of the sad death of Andrew Powell. He first became involved with the Barn playing the lead in *The Country Wife* in 2002. Over the next few years, he directed a festival play and appeared in *Closer*, *The Weir*, *Godspell*, *September Tide* and *Hysteria*. He probably remains in the memory of members for his outstanding performance as Rooster Byron in Rosemary Bianchi’s production of *Jerusalem* in 2012.

Regrettably he had no further contact with us from then on, spending his time, as far as we know, further north in the county where he had his own business, and more recently in Brighton.

An interesting and knowledgeable actor, he was a valuable addition to any company. We send our sincere condolences to his family and friends.

Andrew Powell (II)

Andrew Powell’s death is just so sad, and I know our thoughts and condolences are with his family. He was a real character – huge fun with a wonderful wit – and he was great company.

Andrew was also one of the finest actors to grace the Barn stage. The Barn production of *Jerusalem* was superb: we often hear about productions being ‘as good as the West End’ when in the vast majority of cases they are certainly not, but this production came as close as anything I’ve seen in amateur theatre, and Andrew’s performance was simply superb.

Andrew and I talked (online) about another shared passion, cars. He was full of insightful opinions and advice. I asked him a few months ago how he was coping with the lockdown and he said ‘ok’ as he felt he was ‘a natural recluse’. Clearly, he wasn’t coping.

These are very difficult times and a sad reminder about the need to reach out to people, many of whom may be suffering, often in silence. (Bob Thomson)

George Blee

We received the sad news of George's death in hospital on 7th January from his niece Sue. George was being treated for a fall and contracted Covid. He seemed to be recovering but then succumbed to the virus.

His first mention in the Club archives is for an appearance in *The Thwarting of Baron Bolligrew*, our 1970 Christmas production. He dallied with several other plays and quite a number of House Manager duties but it's ironic that, although these early forays included this Christmas piece, several comedies and a musical, his preference for serious drama and the classics was revealed after he played in Tennessee Williams' *Orpheus Descending* in 1974 and *The Merchant of Venice* in 1977. He was in every one of the ten Shakespeares in our programme up to 2003, highlighted by his Malvolio in 1980.

He continued to be House Manager on many occasions as well, and was an imposing and reliable presence there. He exhibited his range as Chanticleer the cockerel in *The Canterbury Tales*, doubling as King Arthur, in 1988, and played The Common Man in *A Man for All Seasons* in 2005. Along the way he directed a festival play and *Born in the Gardens* in the main house in 1988.

He also had a long career as a professional extra in the film world: the man who dropped the suitcases in *Love Actually* and in the Windmill Theatre audience in *Mrs Henderson Presents*, among many others. He also played for The Hertfordshire Players at the Minack Theatre in Cornwall.

A good companion with a great love of theatre, George was welcome and friendly company, and a member who was not afraid to offer his opinions if he felt that all was not as it should be in the organisation of the Club. It was our loss when he retired to Bournemouth in 2016.

We offer our condolences to his family and friends.

Wendy Lyddon

Sadly, we have to report that Wendy Lyddon, a much-loved volunteer who helped with counting cash and banking after performances, died recently. She also helped out at Handside Post Office, and about 70 people gathered to pay their respects as the funeral procession passed by the Post Office. Wendy always had a smile for everyone and we will miss her.

Sheila Denton

Sheila was a conscientious and beloved member of the costume repair team, who in earlier safer times gathered together in the Green Room on Monday and Tuesday mornings. Sadly, Sheila passed away in March at the age of 85, after suffering from a short illness. She will be greatly missed. Here is a tribute composed by the sewing ladies with whom she shared happy times and friendship. "Sheila had been part of our costume repair shop for about two years. She was a lovely, kind, gentle lady who was really good at repairing things – no job too big or too small. We're going to miss her in our little gang and her lovely smile. RIP Sheila, from all your friends in the costume repair shop." Sheila was a very special lady and her enthusiasm and expertise will be remembered with gratitude and affection. Our thoughts are with her family at this sad time.

Peter Dunham

We heard the sad news last week of the death of Pete Dunham after a brief illness. Always great company, Pete was best known as the leading man in many Welwyn Thaliens productions. Blessed with a beautiful light baritone voice and an engaging stage personality, he gave many outstanding performances over the years.

Apart from the Thaliens, Pete had another string to his bow as a children's entertainer, and friends of mine who had seen him in action said he was immensely popular and successful on those occasions. Some years ago he'd been offered a contract to sing professionally with D'Oyly Carte but chose to continue with his existing engagements, which eventually included a regular stint as Henry VIII, the centrepiece in the colourful Hatfield House Elizabethan evenings, where his talents as host, raconteur and singer entertained many guests.

He also played for the Campus Music Hall and the Barnstormers Music Hall in the 1970s, and appeared in productions at the Minack Theatre for Hertfordshire Players. With Angela he undertook several professional tours singing at events in the Middle East.

The family connection with the local stage was considerable. Pete's father Harold was a founder of the Thaliens; Angela was often his partner duetting in musicals; and his mother-in-law Millie Thompson was a superb accompanist who appeared in Barn events frequently. Children Jonty and Amanda were both in Barn productions, and Amanda (Mandy) is now a regular actor and director at the Barn. Sister Pat has worked backstage with the Barn for many years. Granddaughter Hannah is a professional stand-up comic.

Those of us who knew or worked with Pete always enjoyed his easy companionship, and his great sense of humour.

We send our condolences to Angela and all Pete's family and friends.

SEASON 2021 – 2022

Joan Wilson (I)

We have heard of the recent death of Joan Wilson at her retirement home in the Isle of Wight, where she had moved to be near her daughter's family.

Joan and her whole family were very quickly involved in the activities at the Barn from the word go. She did box office for our very first production *Fings Ain't Wot They Used T'be* in October 1969, and two months later played Andrée in *Gigi*. From then until her final role as Production Secretary on *The Wind in the Willows* in December 2012, her name regularly appears playing roles, and just as often as one or other of box office, Production Secretary, Stage Manager and Prompter in most seasons.

She played animals: Nana in *Peter Pan* (1988) and the Cat in *The Owl and the Pussycat* (1974); witches: in *The Wizard of Oz* (1975) and *Dark of the Moon* in that same year; as well as more 'realistic' roles in other plays such as *Dad's Army* (2008) and *Stepping Out* (1989).

The whole family were Barn regulars. Her late husband Clyde was Chairman and a noted set builder, her son Stephen was Treasurer, and her daughter Julia an actor and director. Apart from drama Joan was enthusiastically involved in the social side

of events at the Club. We offer our condolences to Julia and Steve, and Joan's friends and family.

(Keith Thompson)

Joan Wilson (II)

The skies were low and the wind icy on Saturday 22nd January. But that didn't matter: the ferry from Portsmouth's Gunwharf terminal to Fishbourne, Isle of Wight, was on time and warm inside. As the boat pulled out onto a flat, grey sea I tried make out where key sights were on the mainland, to get my bearings along the West Sussex coast, where I came to live nearly four months ago. When you're trying to establish connections in a new place, familiar feels good.

I know the coast to the west of the port better, around Lymington and Christchurch, as well as the New Forest as that was where my dad lived for a dozen years. I was ridiculously pleased to pick out the familiar shape of the Tudor fort of Hurst Castle, near to Keyhaven marshes, one of the places I loved to go and watch sea birds and waders in the early morning before coming back to have breakfast with my ageing dad.

Memories of the Barn flooded in as I focused on my purpose for the day, going to say farewell to a special friend, someone who had smoothed my way into the Barn community when I first arrived in 2002, wanting to act and direct.

Pictures of the diminutive Joan Wilson, always smartly dressed, always busy, with a ready smile and usually offering a glass of wine and nibbles, or coffee and biscuits, when visiting her home, crowded into my mind. She was one of the 'great and good' at the Barn, running the box office, helping with many shows as prompt or on props or admin, and loving to act, with clear diction and looking classy in her costumes – or in her younger days scrumptious in a bikini, I'm told! Her whole family had been involved over the years and her beloved husband, Clyde, had been a constant presence as a set designer and constructor, before becoming Chairman. Her son Steve carried on the set design tradition, his complex set for a play I directed in 2007, *Safari Party*, which needed to transform from a smart dining room / conservatory to a junk-filled bothy, gaining much praise from the local theatre critic. Her daughter Julia directed and son-in-law Keith Bridgeman both acted and directed before they made their home on the Isle of Wight, where Keith could indulge his other love, sailing.

When you come to a theatre club new to the 'ropes', the culture and the people, it can be difficult to find a way to contribute. Joan was one of those people at the Barn determined that you should love it as much as she did. She offered to be my production secretary on the very first one-act play I was given to direct, *Dock Brief*, testing my skills (and to see if I was up to the Barn's exacting standards!). With her own brand of no-nonsense intelligence and practical wisdom, she went on to be production manager on five of 'my' shows and helped me put together excellent backstage crews. She would have been pleased to know that one of my stage managers, Trevor Watkins, would turn out to be my partner in West Sussex.

Joan's family did so much to support her as she began to show signs of memory loss. Her vascular dementia meant she could no longer lead an independent life. The family home was sold and Joan was moved over to a care home on the Isle of Wight, close by Julia and Keith and their family. Joan would lose her ability to communicate

but her personality stayed calm and cheerful. Julia was diligent at sending out regular updates and photos of Joan so that her friends could keep in touch. The latest news about people and events at the Barn were always welcomed.

The boat touched onto the dock at Fishbourne and I drove off through the busy little town of Newport and eventually on to Freshwater Bay, arriving in comfortable time to Join the family on their short walk to the little Edwardian thatched church of St Agnes.

Inside, peace descended, as the family and friends scattered through the wooden settles, ready for the service of farewell to Joan, who everyone there recognised as 'an all-round Special Person'. An organist led the music, and hymn solos were sung by a tenor, leaving us less musical folk the pleasure of joining in the chorus of *Guide Me O thou Great Redeemer*, which any rugby fan would know well. Julia had organised such a touching service. I smiled, thinking 'Of course – she's a Barn director. She would know how'. The grandchildren and great-grandchildren brought long-stemmed roses to represent each of their lives and placed them by Joan's ashes and photographs of her life. Three family members read poems, their young voices bringing home the importance of family and love in everyone's life. The Rev Leisa, who led the service, seemed to understand the essence of Joan, giving us time for tears and reflection as she read key passages from the Christian scriptures, the faith that Joan followed so sincerely.

I was immensely glad to be there, feeling my connection to Joan just as I had done for all the years I'd known her.

Back to the home of Julia and Keith, all of three minutes' walk away, where we were all welcome. Then the other part of honouring Joan's life began: reminiscing and laughing at the good times. I enjoyed sharing my memories and catching up on family history among the clusters of people. Joan always loved her family, was involved with each of their lives, immensely proud of their achievements, right through the generations. When I think of that now and of her, I'm so pleased to have known her, so very respectful of her talents, glad of shared moments, some theatrical but others touched and changed by her wisdom.

(Yvana Reeves)

Carol Dale

Carole, who died earlier this year, is known in our archives under both her maiden name, Dale, and her married name, Couzens. Joining the Club in 1974 she was quickly involved in a range of backstage roles and then directed several productions and played in half-a-dozen main-house productions. More recently she was a regular supporter of the morning play-reading group.

Originally from a west Canadian backwoods' township, she was a qualified accountant and financial adviser and served as highly regarded Financial Director to the Club from 2005 to 2008. Her husband Bill, a local Councillor for many years, is a supporter of our shows, and her daughter Sarah-Jean who played in Youth productions here, became a professional trapeze artist. Carole took her interest in drama seriously and would happily discuss it socially and in committee, and was a valued member of the Club.

We offer our sincere condolences to Bill and her friends and family.

(Keith Thompson)

Anne Davis

Anne Davis, the wife of our President Louis Davis, died in hospital in late April after a long period of care at home.

Anne met Louis when she was his nurse when he was a patient at the Middlesex Hospital. She was one of three daughters of Roy Brewer, the leading light in the Welwyn Drama Club at the Barn, and this led to Louis joining the Drama Club. They set up home in Radlett and in the 1950s Anne worked backstage on a number of plays in which Louis was involved either acting or stage managing, and many of which were directed by her father Roy. Her sister Janet (Aspey) was also very involved at the Barn.

According to the archives her active involvement in plays ended in 1997 but by then family commitments had overtaken it. She was only on the crew of four plays for the Barn Theatre Club between 1979 and 1997. Nonetheless, with Louis as the first Chairman of the new club she accompanied him regularly to our theatre. A charming and gracious 'first lady', she was always here to support Louis and our efforts. They moved to the Garden City and lived very near the Barn for some years.

Anne had long ago converted to Louis's faith, and was buried at the Jewish cemetery in Edgware. This sad occasion was an opportunity to meet again the members of the family, Jo, Kate, Ben and Mark, and their spouses. We offer our sincere condolences to them all, and to Louis, for their loss, and ours.

(Keith Thompson)

Andy Baker

In June we heard of the death of Andrew Baker. For some years we had lost touch with him as he took his technical talents to other spheres. His first reference in our archives is doing sound and lighting for *Once a Catholic* in 1987. For the next 12 years until 1999 he was a leading hand in the development and operation of the Barn's electrical facilities, upgrading and rewiring the stage lighting control system and updating the supply mains to the building. This work received a tribute from the Chairman Eric Farlie in his report to the AGM.

During the 1990s he served variously as Stage Director and Services Director on Council and as Technical Consultant to our Lottery Application in 1997. His last involvement was as Stage Manager for *Chapter Two* in 1999.

We offer our sincere condolences to his family and friends.

(Keith Thompson)

