

## “We’ll always have Paris”

What a splendid production this was. Confident direction of two first class actors at the top of their form using a very simple set gave us an evening to remind us that less really can be more. Helen Belcham and David Oliver created two utterly convincing characters who moved through a journey to rediscover some joy in their lives after being almost too long married.

When we first saw them they were too bored with each other even to have a decent row. Their spats had a ritual about them which were very disrespectful but lacking in real passion; not because the actors failed to portray their feelings, but because their characters were too tired and bored with each other to care enough to get properly angry.

When the wife won a competition – a weekend in Paris – it was touch and go whether her husband could even be bothered to go with her. Even-

actually they go together – their first time out of Yorkshire and find themselves on an overnight voyage from Hull to ‘the continent’. Paris is a revelation to both of them though they struggle with language and different customs.

The scenes were quickly and slickly changed from home to boat, to restaurant, to hotel, disco, art gallery and back home again. What a Master class this was to the many directors who don’t seem to trust their audience to bring their brains with them when they go to the theatre. No black clad backstage crew in sight, no ponderous scene shifting and lengthy intervals between scenes were offered. Instead the actors moved a couple of chairs a few yards across stage and suddenly we were in a restaurant. The actors believed they were in the restaurant and so of course, did we.

My favourite scene was the one in which the wife danced on her own



David Oliver and Helen Belcham in April in Paris

in the disco whilst her husband mused on his life and insecurities. Helen moved simply around the whole stage and to the beat. There was nothing too flashy or distracting about her dancing but she seemed absolutely comfortable in her enjoyment of the music. Meanwhile her husband stayed on one spot and talked simply and movingly about his sense of isolation and loss of excitement in his life. There were a few flashes of light from coloured floods to help set the disco scene but again nothing too distracting. The real focus was on David’s speech but Helen’s movement gently around him was always in his peripheral vision. It gave a moving sense of how near was a different type of life that he couldn’t yet allow himself to grasp.

This was a really excellent production, well done all round!

### *Dates For Your Diary*

#### Auditions

Sun 5th June

7.30 pm at Richmond Hall.  
See Website for play details

#### End of Season Party

Sat 9th July 7.30 for 8.00 pm  
Heswall British Legion  
Book before 9th June  
to avoid disappointment

#### Richmond Hall AGM

AGM will be held on Sunday  
3rd July 7.00pm

#### Riverside Players AGM

AGM will be held on Sunday  
3rd July 8.00pm

**PLEASE ATTEND**

# Members Get Members

Since the Second World War our way of life has altered considerably with the demands on time and the advent of modern technology resulting in busier lives with less commitment to organisations art and social events. No longer is there a place for the medium pace of life, the leisurely one hour business lunch, the call at the pub or 'watering hole' for a drink on the way home, the longer time with the children and overall entertainment other than the TV.

The resultant change is that all organisations are suffering a lack of support to recruit new members to continue to maintain the high standards of commitment to ensure the survival of many well founded activities. Round Table, Rotary Clubs, Ladies Circles, Business and Professional Women's Organisations and even church congregations, dwindle due change. Operatic and Amateur Dramatic Societies are suffering a similar fate including Riverside Players whose committee are struggling with a slowly dwindling number of patrons and members. Whilst

advertising helps and personal contact encourages, leaving the obtaining of new members to an appointed committee is restrictive and limited in its operation.

The most effective way to correct the current slide is MGM. No! not Metro Goldwyn Mayer, but **MEMBERS GET MEMBERS**. It is up to each individual member to obtain new members and patrons by personal approach, an invitation to plays, performances and social events and to show what pleasure and fun can be obtained by being involved. The survival of any society rests with its members and Riverside Players is no exception. So, next time you meet someone who could be encouraged, just think of **MGM** and go for it.

Eric Murch



## Chairman's Chat



**A**s my year's tenure as Chairman draws to a close and as this is likely to be the last Newsletter before I hand over to Ann Warr, I would like to thank all those who have worked so hard to help make the year such an enjoyable one.

Obviously my thanks are due to all members of the Committee who in their respective roles have been so diligent and contributed so much, but there are others who have been involved 'behind the Scenes' Bryan Bower for display board distribution, Keith Hill for the flyers, Ted Bullen for programme preparation, Katie Welshman for co-ordinating rehearsal refreshments and Social Activities and all those who have volunteered their time to do teas and coffees. Indeed, to all those who have played a part in the Year's Activities, my thanks.

Please let Katie or Me know whether you are coming along to the Final Social Evening of the Season by Saturday 9th June at the latest - details elsewhere in the Newsletter, and also, it would be lovely to see many members at the AGM on Sunday 3rd July at 8.00pm

*John*

## Riverside End of Season Party Saturday July 9th, 7.30 for 8.00pm

Heswall British Legion.

Supper with entertainment by  
The Peninsula Jazz Band.

£15 per ticket



Bookings for the end of season party **MUST** be received no later than Wednesday June 9th 2011. Please phone: John Welshman 0151 632 4923 or Katie Welshman 07591759610

No booking? No party!



# Helen & Beryl - Pointless !

In February I persuaded Beryl Kenrick to join me in applying for BBC 2's quiz "Pointless". We sent off the application forms (trying to make ourselves sound as interesting as possible). On 4th April, we were called to Manchester for an audition. Three days later, we were told that we were

successful and would be filming on 12<sup>th</sup> May in London.

At 9.15 a.m. on Thursday we arrived at Television Centre and were escorted to the Green room, where we met all the other contestants. The main piece of advice we were given was not to reveal any of our strengths to anyone, as they could well use it against us later in the live game. We were taken to make-up and the wardrobe department chose our outfits from the five we had had to take. We were taken into the actual studio to be shown the marks where we had to stand and to see if we could read the board.



After all that waiting, it was suddenly our turn! (Oh how I wish we had revised a bit more!) We were miked up and told not to swear or try to whisper an answer to our partners, as every sound would be picked up by the mixing desk. Beryl had picked position number 2 out of the hat, so we stood at the podium. The presenters Alexander Armstrong and Richard Osman came and introduced themselves and chatted to put us at our ease.

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## Quiz answers



While I wouldn't say I was inundated with requests for clues about Charles Riley's quiz last month I suspect there may have been some interest in his theatrical esotericism even if only to be able to tell him that according to 'Mrs Miggin's Vade Mecum of Thespian Occultation' all his answers are wrong. I reprint the questions below with the answers. If you disagree with them, don't ring me.

**In days gone by, fish & chips were often brought backstage by performers as their evening meal. This had to be done secretly, as one wasn't supposed to bring them into a theatre. Why?**

- A Management forbade eating on the premises      B Food could only be bought from the theatre caterers  
C A dropped greasy chip could cause a dancer to slip      D Fish were said to bring evil spirits into the theatre

**Answer: C - Actors are 10 a penny but bullets are expensive if you have to put down a dancer.**

**To ensure all sound, lighting, and scenery cues are executed correctly, the show is "called". Who does this?**

- A Assistant Stage Manager      B Prompter      C Deputy stage manager      D Stage Manager

**Answer: C - SM's wouldn't demean themselves while ASM's can't read and talk at the same time and the Prompt is far too busy having the most lines to say in the entire play.**

**You are watching a scene set in a drawing room, and a performer crosses to a side table and switches on a lamp, which actually comes on. What term is used for this type of prop?**

- A Real      B Live      C Active      D Practical

**Answer: D - Nothing is 'real' in the theatre, while actors need to be very wary of anything described as 'live' after the electrician has been on stage and 'active' somehow just sounds too dynamic for a lethargic thespian.**

**Your ticket says; curtain up at 7.30. Cast and crew involved in the first scene receive a call at "the half", which is when?**

- A 30 minutes before the performance begins      B 1 hour before the performance begins  
C 45 minutes before the performance begins      C 35 minutes before the performance begins

**Answer: C - We all knew that didn't we - apart from those of us who turn up 5 minutes before the curtain up.**

**Prudent theatre managers will ensure that a single light is left switched on onstage overnight. What name is given to this nocturnal illumination?**

- A Working light      B Ghost light - to placate the inevitable ghost that inhabits a theatre and bring good luck  
C Blue      D Backlight

**Answer: B - Because we are a superstitious lot at heart and as everyone knows, a backlight is something directors and lighting techies go on about ad nauseam, a blue light is what we see as we wend drunkenly home from the last night party. As for a working light, does anyone actually work in a theatre?**

# Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir

As a member of Riverside for approaching 20 years and a member of the Committee for most of that time I believe that we need to initiate a debate on the future of Riverside Players.

When I first joined this was an organisation with a pool of talent both in terms of directors, actors and backstage with a national reputation for high class drama, a reliable audience base, a healthy balance sheet and the aspiration to own and run its own theatre. However even then the cracks were beginning to show as there was a marked elderly bias in the active membership which has increased down the years.

This has brought us to the position which we now find ourselves with two major potentially terminal problems i.e.

- 1 The absence of a committed pool of reliable and capable production workers ranging from directors through to scene shifters and tea-makers
- 2 The problem of dwindling audiences as the old are not replaced by the young despite the increase in the amount of drama now being taught in schools.

In an attempt to counter the second of these problems the decision was taken some years ago to take one production to Gladstone to gain a new following who would support productions in Heswall. The initial move brought an increased audience and a profit despite the increased costs. Doubts about the future of Heswall Hall increased the pressure to return to Gladstone but subsequently every production has lost serious money. Despite intensive advertising the audiences at Gladstone are similar to Heswall and no way cover the additional cost.

The audiences at both venues have not been helped by a series of bad plays and bad productions over the last few years. Major problems have been encountered in persuading directors and actors to enter productions and in providing backstage support; and often this has been reflected on the stage and in the accounts.

Despite efforts down the years to address the problems none have been even moderately successful and I believe that the time has come when decisions have to be made on whether Riverside has a future and if so what form does it take. These need to be taken by the whole membership and thus the forthcoming AGM should be the forum at which the debate and its implications are considered .

In my view doing nothing is not an option.

John Quirk

## Helen & Beryl - Pointless !

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Suddenly it was lights, camera, action and off we went. Alexander asked us all about Riverside Players of Heswall and then stopped mid stream to say he had a message on his earpiece to say that the Vision mixer, Stewart Owen, had just informed him that he had been a Riverside Junior in the 1980s. What an amazing coincidence. We switched back to recording mode, he finished asking all the other contestants about themselves and the first category was announced.

Sorry folks – can't tell you any more. You will have to tune in at the end of September to find out how we got on. BBC2 at 4.30 p.m. every afternoon or in a future edition of CentreStage.

Helen Belcham



**Bringing Theatre to the People of Wirral**

[www.riversideplayers.org](http://www.riversideplayers.org)

The Riverside Players is a Registered Charity No. 514741



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