

Parish Players' *Dad's Army*, May 2011

Review by David Hall

The problem with doing a show where the characters are so familiar is that you start by comparing them with the original performers and the way they played the parts. But once I got used to different actors, it was easy to settle down and enjoy the show.

Mainwaring was ably played by Peter Smith, matching Arthur Lowe's pomposity to a tee! The more wistful Sergeant Wilson was well observed by Richard Warner. I particularly enjoyed the very funny performance of Justin Webster as Corporal Jones.

Some of the best comic lines were delivered with great timing by Angus Litster as Fraser. Jack Pallister was also well cast as the youthful, awkward Pike. Chris Abbott effectively aged into doddering Godfrey, whilst Paul Riches converted himself credibly into the spiv Walker. The other ever-present privates were Cheeseman, with David Reeves doing a convincing Welsh accent, Robert Lawrence as Hancock, and Charlie Swift providing piano accompaniment.

Before the show began, irascible Warden Hodges (Geoff Start) told us to turn those lights out - and those mobiles off - to the sound of air-raid sirens. In *The Deadly Attachment* our heroes are instructed by the lisping Colonel (played delightfully by Graham McCubbin) to watch over a captured U-boat crew, led by the believably Teutonic Nick Carroll. In *Mum's Army*, widow Fiona Gray was played by the beguiling Maria Cheetham.

Act 2 began with The Godiva Affair, featuring the Verger (David Golder) the Vicar (Adrian Clifton) and lecherous town clerk Mr. Gordon (Pete Ranford). The final scene had Mainwaring back to his pompous best, conducting the troops and the townswomen in a surprisingly tuneful version of the Floral Dance, delivered in true comic tradition.

There were many other players in the cast and to a person they stayed in character throughout, testament to the quality and depth of the talent at Parish Players!

Set design and construction was led by Neil Hellard, Steve Balsom and Tom Ryder, and was suitably period with lots of lovely little touches. It cleverly separated Mainwaring's office from the main hall by a door at the back of the stage.

The costumes (and hair and make-up) were also very period - credit to Anita Simpson, Carol McCubbin and Caryl Court.

Clever incidental music, sound, lights, props, and the backstage crew all helped pull the show together. The scene changes in particular were impressively quick.

This was a bold, but imaginative, directorial debut performance by Roy Perryment and Hannah Reeves. May this be the first of many directing roles for you both.