

OCTOBER 2018

# newsletter

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**sewellbarn**  
THEATRE

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

## Our Next Production

# Handbagged

by Moira Buffini | Directed by Clare Williamson

11-13, 17-20 October 2018 at 7.30pm; matinee 20 October at 2.30pm



Photography: Sean Owen

If anyone had told me in the 1980s that, thirty years later, I'd be directing a play about Margaret Thatcher's eleven year reign of power and enjoying every minute of it, I would have thought they were mad! And yet here we are, exploring all the tumultuous events that occurred as she sought to "change the soul of this country".

Many of you will have seen Moira Buffini's *Dinner*, which played to great acclaim at the Barn last season. Although *Handbagged* is much more stylised, there is the same sharp and incisive writing which is used to great effect to get serious political points across to the audience without taking sides. There are always two Queens (Gill Tichborne and Mandy Kiley) and two Thatchers (Alexandra Evans and Marie Cooper) on stage who are aided and enhanced by a succession of satirical cameos of the great and the good – from Denis Thatcher to Nancy Reagan, as well as the occasional footman, all portrayed by two male actors (Will Harragan and Kevin Oelrichs). The resulting comic contradiction of statements and events by the older, more knowing, versions of the women, as the play leads us through Thatcher's premiership, along with interventions by Actors 1 & 2, both in and out of role, add perspective and food for thought as well as humour. More than halfway through rehearsals we are still laughing at the dialogue and the characters.

I am blessed with a fantastically talented and dedicated cast and crew who are working so hard to bring this show to fruition and we look forward to seeing you for this first production of our new season. If you lived through the 80s we'll help you remember. If you weren't alive then, we'll give you a guided tour of the great events of the day!

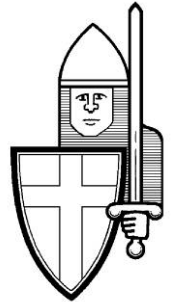
*Clare Williamson: Director*

# Rebellious Sisterhood: Votes for Women

We are thrilled to welcome **Broad Horizons Theatre Group**, for one night only as part of their autumn tour, to present this exciting play: it offers a rare glimpse behind the scenes of the private lives and the personal cost paid by the leaders of the Suffragettes. Don't miss this excellent show on **Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> October** at 7.30pm.

## Bookings

Our telephone and walk-in ticket bookings are handled by **St George's Music Shop** (near the Norwich Playhouse). Chris and his team will be pleased to welcome you to 17-19 St George's Street Norwich NR3 1AB, tel: 01603 626414, or visit our online bookings link at <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/sewellbarn>. Payment can be made by credit or debit card at St George's, but please note that only cash payments can be made if purchasing tickets on the door.



## Our previous production

# Tomfoolery

Adapted by **Cameron Mackintosh and Robin Ray** | Directed by **Cassie Tillett**

**12-14 & 18-21 July 2018**



Photography: Barry Parsons

Our 2017-18 season concluded with our tribute to the genius of Tom Lehrer – the Harvard-educated professor of mathematics who turned to satirical entertainment for a fairly brief period in the 1960s, and has become legendary.

"I had the most fabulous evening last night at Tomfoolery, Sewell Barn Theatre. It has to be **one of the most slick amateur productions I've ever seen** - every line milked and polished to the utmost. I didn't stop grinning all night. Thanks to Cassie, Selwyn, Angela and everyone else for ultimate sublimity." *Clare H*

"Just been to see Tomfoolery at Sewell Barn Theatre... two words... **Bloody Brilliant!!** Cassie, could you please say thank you & well done to ALL cast & crew from me please!" *Adrian W*

You can see many more delightful reviews on our website at <http://sewellbarntheatre.blogspot.com/>; however, a letter that was delayed in reaching us due to the summer holidays, which turned up in the hands of the director just the day before this newsletter was prepared, sums it up.

"I am an avid theatre-goer but **I have seldom or never seen a better production** than your *Tomfoolery*. It was sophisticated, slick beyond words and such fun. Thank you for giving me an evening I will remember and treasure."

## Coming Soon

# Not About Heroes

by Stephen MacDonald | Directed by Rob Tiffen

22-24, 28-29 November, 1 December 2018



“This book is not about heroes. English poetry is not yet fit to speak of them.” So wrote Wilfred Owen in the preface of his collected poems.

In an extended duologue, *Not About Heroes* explores the relationship between Owen, a young, unknown poet, and Siegfried Sassoon who becomes his mentor and champion, after their initial meeting at Craiglockhart Hospital whilst recovering from shell shock.

Their friendship deepens despite their differing attitudes towards war and heroism, ending in Owen’s untimely death one week before Armistice day in November 1918. It is intimate, political, both naturalistic and theatrical, and ultimately, of course, poetical.

## Audition news

Our February-March production is **Confusions**: a wonderful sequence of five interconnected one-act plays from the pen of the sharply observant Alan Ayckbourn. Directed by Angela Rowe, this offers five excellent opportunities for actors to play several roles each (2F/3M). Auditions take place on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> October at 7.30pm at the Barn, and rehearsals will begin in December. Please visit our website for more information, or contact Angela on [angelarowe@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:angelarowe@hotmail.co.uk).

## AGM

Our AGM will be held this year on **Sunday 28 October**. Doors will open at 11.30 am and the meeting will be at 12 noon. There will be a ‘bring and share’ lunch (please only bring the quantity you could eat yourself). The bar will be open. All are welcome to attend but only paid up members (see below) are entitled to vote. Please let Selwyn Tillet (secretary) know if you are attending and please also send apologies to him on [selwyn@tillett.org.uk](mailto:selwyn@tillett.org.uk).

## Membership renewals and Gift Aid

Just a reminder that **membership fees for Friends of the Sewell Barn are now due**. It’s an excellent way to support our work at the Sewell Barn, and we very much appreciate it. The Friends are entitled to voting rights at our AGM in the autumn, giving you an active say in the running of your theatre, and receive a free drink on first nights. Please note (as explained below) that our free drinks on the first night of each run will be available to paid-up members only, on production of a valid membership card. If you are an annual member you’ll get a new card when you renew; if you’re a life member, but have mislaid your card, please email [membership@sewellbarn.org](mailto:membership@sewellbarn.org) or write to me for a replacement.

Many thanks to all those who have already renewed their membership. If you have not yet done so and would like to remain a member, please send £10 (single member) £15 (for a couple living at the same address) or £50 per person (Life membership) to Jill Fuller, 20 Blofield Road, Brundall, Norwich, NR13 5NN or pay by bank transfer Lloyds bank: Sewell Barn Theatre Society. a/c no: 02167536 branch sort code: 30-96-17. If you do not renew by the end of October, we will assume you do not wish to renew. Many thanks.

*Jill Fuller* (acting Membership Sec)

## Members' Bonus

From the beginning of this season, free drinks (wines, beers, soft drinks and hot drinks) on the first night of each production will be for members only (on production of a valid membership card. (If you have mislaid your card, please let me know and I will issue a replacement.) In addition, we will be serving free tea and coffee to all audience members at Saturday matinée performances.

Jill Fuller [membership@sewellbarn.org](mailto:membership@sewellbarn.org)

## Good News

We are delighted to announce that as from the first production of this season, we will be serving Norfolk Gin in the bar. Your G&Ts have suddenly become up-market! (but not at an up-market price). All our other drinks are still on offer, of course, but why not give Norfolk Gin a try?



## Help needed!

### Front of house

For every performance, we have to provide three stewards and two bar staff. We need you! Could you possibly spare an evening during the run of a production to help out? We will train anyone new to the job. It isn't an arduous task, and is in fact a very nice way to meet people and to promote the Barn through chatting to audiences. So if you would like to be involved, or haven't done it for a while, please contact Jane Page, who will put you on the rota, on [foh@sewellbarn.org](mailto:foh@sewellbarn.org).

## Archives

We have a lot of very interesting photos and past programmes. In the past we have had an 'archivist' who has put these in some sort of order; however, at the moment we do not have anyone who is doing this. If you have a little time to spare and would find this interesting, please contact Cassie Tillett on [admin@sewellbarn.org](mailto:admin@sewellbarn.org) for more details.

## For the Love of Mike

*The Sewell Barn family lost a dear friend and a loyal member this summer. Mike Beavis was a hardworking and much loved member of the team. Here are some tributes to his memory.*

Who was Mike to me? He was an "Unsung Hero". "No fuss, just get on with it" was his motto. He was a man of immense loyalty who always delivered the goods. "Good Old Mike" people would echo, without realizing what "a gem" they had in him. I had met him and his wife Jan through the theatre many years ago, they came as a package – so costume and lights sorted! To my knowledge it started with the Drayton players then many a production at the Maddermarket theatre (possibly hundreds, it was a time that you had to go to the theatre to have a chat with him). The Sewell Barn theatre was to follow. Here he was a fixture, where he served on committee, firstly as building manager then as technical manager. Mike had designed and operated so many shows and never took a bow – it wasn't about him! Always about the play. He had many Henry Burke productions on his list of credits.

I mentioned that Mike was part of a package – later he would break away and become the number one lighting "go to" person on the local scene, he always would work on Michelle Montague's productions and liked to work on mine which I always took as a great compliment, where he would shine brightly in the

theatres of Norwich as a star in his own right. He would become a champion of teaching youngsters the way around the faders; I know that, because I learnt much from Mike's easy way that would instil confidence. He felt that it was important to show love and patience to young people and allow them to discover how they could flourish. It is no secret that Mike and Jan adopted two children Simon and Michelle, although I didn't know this for many years as he always talked about his son and daughter as any father would.

Mike would often come to visit me – we would sit in the garden and drink a beer and put the world to rights – well, certainly the local theatre scene. He also had a soft spot for dogs, and they loved him back. I had, and still do have King Charles Spaniels, so another reason to visit. Family was the most important thing to Mike, he would always try to do right by his children and grandson, Nile whom he loved deeply. I know that he played his part in being there for Nile and helping towards his education. He saw it as an investment for the future - everyone's.

Towards the end he was a very ill man although he never made a big deal about his suffering. He was concerned about those that would be left behind. It was important that Jan would be safe and cared for, and she is with the support of Simon, Michelle and Nile – the family! Nile is to go on to college and succeed and be happy and the investment will mature.

I said at the start - “unsung” – maybe, but a Hero, who held the respect of many and was loved by many. He did amazing things that went under the radar. He didn't want a fuss, but he truly won the gold medal for being “understated”, while touching so many lives and “making a difference”. Many of us will miss him, but he will remain in our hearts for all that he has done with his incredible deeds. He must rank among those who have giving an amazing amount of passion and time to making the magic of theatre for all to enjoy and to instilling memories that will last for ever in some. Thank you, Mike, for everything.

### ***Robert Little***

I have today heard the sad news of the death of Mike Beavis, who for many years played a vital part in the running of Sewell Barn .A gentle giant whose calm and kind approach helped me personally in many ways, both as a director and during my time as Chair of the committee. The theatre owes him so much for the time and energy he gave when preparing for the many productions in which he played a vital role. Quietly offering help and advice, and ably managing the technology that to many seemed something of a mystery . Thus he leaves a legacy that should not be forgotten as the theatre continues to move forward into the future.

Mike's other huge gift to the theatre was that he and Jan brought their daughter (Michelle Montague ) up to love and appreciate the theatre , and those of us who were privileged to work with her during her years as Artistic Director of Sewell Barn will know just how much she revered both her parents. Their legacy goes on as Michelle continues to make her name in the Norfolk theatre world.

Four years ago I moved away from Norfolk to live nearer my family, however I have remained in contact with long standing friends , and as I live in the somewhat harsher fast lane of life near London, I remember with huge affection the kind and gentle approach of friends such as Mike. At this very sad time for the family, I am sure many would want to join me in sending our love and sympathy to Jan, Michelle, Nile and Simon.

### ***Jenny Hobson***

Mum, Nile, Simon and I would like to thank the Sewell Barn Theatre Company for offering dad friendships and a space to light up his world.

Dad and I would like to thank our 'Barn family' for allowing us to spend creative time together and to work on our projects. From the bottom of our hearts, it has been an absolute pleasure.

### ***Miche Montague***

*Mike seldom appeared in photographs, but preferred his work on stage to represent him; the image below is taken from *The Long, The Short and The Tall*, of which he was especially proud, in 2011.*



## **What else is on in the area?**

### **Maddermarket Theatre**

[www.maddermarket.co.uk](http://www.maddermarket.co.uk)

St. John's Alley, Norwich NR2 1DR

***Mary Shelley*** by Helen Edmundson **19-27 October**



### **Great Hall Theatre Company**

[www.greathalltheatre.org.uk](http://www.greathalltheatre.org.uk)

The Assembly Rooms, Theatre Street, Norwich NR2 1RQ

***The Herd*** by Rory Kinnear **30 October-3 November**

