

The Rotherfield  
Players Present

# Swallows Amazons

By Arthur Ransome

28th - 30th Jan 2016



Programme £2

Rotherfield Village Hall

adapted by Helen Edmundson & Neil Hannon  
by arrangement with Nick Hern Books



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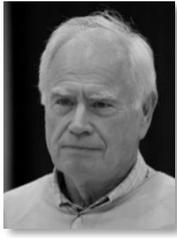
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# From the Chairman and Director



**Andy Miller**  
Chairman

Welcome to yet another bold venture into a different slant on theatrical entertainment for the Players. This production of Swallows and Amazons not only replaces our traditional spot for Pantomime but also teases with our views of the

behaviour of adults and children.

We are very blessed with talent in the Players and no more than with Alan as a producer. Always the cry goes up at auditions of a wish to be directed by Alan not just for the pleasure but for the knowing how much he gets out of his actors. As usual his imagination extends to set and props ideas as well as every aspect of the acting and staging.

So enough of the hard sell; sit back

and enjoy a funny, sometimes deep but always entertaining, delightful slant on a story which will have many happy memories for the older amongst us, and awake new delight for those for whom this is a new adventure.

And if the roar of the greasepaint and the smell of the crowd set something tingling in your chest, why not join us in one of our many roles in the Players.



**Alan Powell**  
Director

“Who would wave a flag to be rescued if they had a desert island of their own? That was the thing that spoilt Robinson Crusoe. In the end he came home. There never ought to be an end.” - Arthur Ransome

Despite copious attendances as both performer and audience member, I never have been a huge fan of the traditional pantomime; so when the January slot became available for Direction, I tentatively suggested at Committee meeting the possibility of me taking the reins if I could break with precedent and not look at Pantomime scripts, but instead perhaps find some family-centric drama? It turned out that this had happened on more than one occasion and so was definitely an option. I began to think about traditional family stories and liked The Narnia adventures, but these were earmarked for the Juniors (who went on to do “Into The Woods” instead) and Treasure Island, which I had found dark and enthralling at The National Theatre in January. As we were having the loft converted, I was in the process of boxing up old books to store, and stumbled across an old copy of Arthur Ransom’s Swallows and Amazons from my school days and had the ‘light bulb moment’.

It was immediately apparent that this wonderful story of childhood adventure in an innocent, bygone era

was somewhat unknown to younger generations, yet their parents and grandparents were familiar with it, and many cherished it as part of their childhood. I thought it would be lovely to bring the story to a new generation, and coincidentally so did the BBC who completed filming on their new film version mid 2015 with Sherlock star Andrew Scott. 2016 looks set to see a resurgence in Swallow’s fever, and a huge headache for the Health and Safety fanatics and do-gooders!

Of course there needed to be a script available, and luckily the Royal National Theatre, in association with the Bristol Old Vic, had produced a version in 2010, and the rights were available. I really liked the episodic structure of the play, fundamentally a drama with songs punctuating the action and simplified musical accompaniment as opposed to a musical. There were a few limited clips of the production online to give a flavour, but no cast recording of the music, which arrived in a baffling, chunky score that did not match the script. The play relies very much on use of the imagination and suspension of disbelief- thinking, dreaming and imagining like a child again. The biggest hurdle was the use of the space allowing the stage the duality of being both land and lake, and different areas of both at that. I want the audience to feel transported through the naturalistic frame of geographical recognition (maps) into the children’s realm, coincidentally like the stepping through the Wardrobe to Narnia. The use of puppetry and

suggestion through props and physicalisation seemed a great way to challenge the audience’s imaginations. The rehearsal process was very challenging with the festive period, absences and complicated blocking and character development, but the tenacity of cast and crew spurred me on as I went through the obligatory moments of self-doubt.

I must again shower down praise on an extraordinary team who have worked tirelessly sewing and stitching, nailing and drilling, ivory tinkling and string strumming, serving and assisting and so much more. An amazing cast, who were supportive and generous in the collaborative process, and quite simply brilliant in their execution of the text. Huge thanks to the boys with the magic of technical wizardry in Sound and Light, a calming and brilliant Stage Manager and finally Producer who, despite constant attempts to save money, never wavered from a belief in what we were trying to achieve.

The world has changed, but don’t let them take our imaginations....

## INVITATION

If you are a dreamer, come in  
If you are a dreamer, a wisher, a liar,  
A hope-er, a pray-er,  
a magic bean buyer...  
If you’re a pretender,  
come sit by the fire  
For we have some  
flax-golden tales to spin.  
Come in!  
Come in!

*Shel Silverstein*

# The Cast

## The Swallows

**Old Titty** Alison Organ  
**Titty Walker** Kate Awcock  
**Roger Walker** Graham Scott  
**John Walker** Barry Shyvers  
**Susan Walker** Becky Syms

## The Amazons

**Nancy Blackett** Kate Organ  
**Peggy Blackett** Alison Close

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## The Swallows and Amazons Gang

Dan Shaw Iris Williams Freya Hiles Toby Martin  
Beth Campbell Tahlia Trengove

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<b>Polly</b>	Georgie Dolding	<b>Adult Charcoal Burners</b>	Louise Coe
<b>Mother</b>	Rachel Martin		Sheenagh Thorpe
<b>Mr Jackson</b>	Paul Philpott	<b>Junior Charcoal Burners</b>	George Robertson
<b>Captain Flint</b>	Larry Robinson		Louie Wood
<b>Policeman</b>	Sammy Dawkins	<b>Pirates</b>	Lynn Lunn
			Emma Harrison



# Biographies



## Alison Organ - Old Titty

Alison is our only remaining founder member from 1976 and so has a massive list of roles and back stage credits that would take the whole page to describe. Her recent appearances have been in "The Sound of Music", "Road" and "The Cemetery Club". Alison directed "A Streetcar Named Desire" in 2013".



## Kate Awcock - Titty Walker

Joined us in 2005 for Calamity Jane and has since played a variety of roles such as Goldilocks (herself), Madame de Volanges in "Les Liaison Dangereuse", Dandini in "Cinderella" and Captain Tench in "Our Country's Good". Kate was in "Road", played Princess Alexandra in "The Elephant Man" and Yu-Dun-Wong in "Aladdin"!



## Graham Scott - Roger Walker

Graham joined us in 2012, playing Gomm in "The Elephant Man". This was followed by Scullery in "Road", Sam in "The Cemetery Club" and Ray Say in "The Rise and Fall of Little Voice".



## Barry Shyvers - John Walker

Notable appearances on our stage for Barry have included Wild Bill Hickok in "Calamity Jane", Jesus in "Godspell", Petruccio in "Kiss Me Kate", the dentist AND the voice of the plant in "Little Shop of Horrors", the Genie in "Aladdin" and finally Eddie in "Road".



## Becky Syms - Susan Walker

Becky has performed in a variety of shows; noteworthy being Billy in "Jack and the Beanstalk", Selby in "Steel Magnolias", Yvette in "Allo Allo", Katie Brown in "Calamity Jane", Lady Chiltern in "An Ideal Husband", the Prince in "Goldilocks", Sonia in "Godspell", Ronette in "Little Shop of Horrors" and Aladdin.



## Kate Organ - Nancy Blackett

Ella in "Dark of the Moon" 1980 was Kate's first role aged about 14. Since then notable appearances have been Prince Pekoe in "Aladdin", Margaret in "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof", Mrs Elvsted in Hedda Gabler, Eliza in My Fair Lady, Philostrata in "A Midsummer Night's Dream", Jack in "Jack and the Beanstalk", Helga in "Allo Allo", Joanne in "Godspell", Lois Lane in "Kiss Me Kate" and Blanche DuBois in "A Streetcar Named Desire".



## Alison Close - Peggy Blackett

Alison started acting with us in "Road" in 2014 as Valerie and then Monique in "Beauty and the Beast". Alison is also a superb artist.





# Backstage

<b>Director</b>	Alan Powell	<b>Stage Hands</b>	Heather Campbell
<b>Stage Manager</b>	Heather Campbell		Mark Tasker
<b>Producer</b>	James Gallifant		Iona Baily
<b>Music</b>	Anna Thompson (piano)		Trevor Lowndes
	Jeremy Smith (guitar)	<b>Costumes</b>	Helen Gallifant
	Robert Chesterton (assistant)		Sue Exton
<b>Set Design</b>	Andy Miller		Grace Greenaway
	Mark Tasker		Sue Krume
<b>Set Construction</b>	Andy Miller	<b>Make Up</b>	Annie Darling
	Mark Tasker	<b>Front of House</b>	Judith Hardy
	Becky Stuart	<b>Bar Manager</b>	Brett Seath
	Trevor Lowndes	<b>Box Office</b>	Nicky Dawkins
<b>Lighting</b>	James Harris Hire	<b>Poster Design</b>	Stephen Knowlden
	Keith Finch	<b>Programme</b>	Gillian Earle
<b>Sound</b>	Terry Everitt	<b>Photography</b>	Mark Kennedy
<b>Stage Properties</b>	Iona Baily	<b>Publicity</b>	Brett Seath
<b>Prompt</b>	Caroline Brackley		

## Some Unsung Heroes

For the past six years Judith Hardy has performed the role of organising "Front of House". She made such a success of the job back in 2010 that she has been asked to do it every time since. Perhaps we work her too hard as she was carted off in an ambulance on one occasion!! However, Judith was soon back and assuming her rightful position. It's a really important job as it ensures that the evening runs like clockwork. Judith organises everybody on this side of the curtain; teas, programme sales and charity collections. Judith can eject people from the tiered seating (without valid tickets) in the nicest possible way.

Those little bits and pieces that people carry about on stage are called personal properties. Iona Baily has been our star collector over the past three years or so. Finding the objects is quite a skill. Charity shops and antique shops are a good source but then it is quite surprising what can emerge from the collections of some of our members!!

Nicky Dawkins once sat in the doorway of the Village Hall having volunteered to check and sell more tickets on the door. Well, the cash balanced first time on each night and we realised that Nicky was a natural box office star. Even better, Nicky was able to use the spreadsheet that had been created for the purpose. The box office job can be quite frustrating at times so we are delighted to say "thank you" to Nicky.



# The Last 10 Years

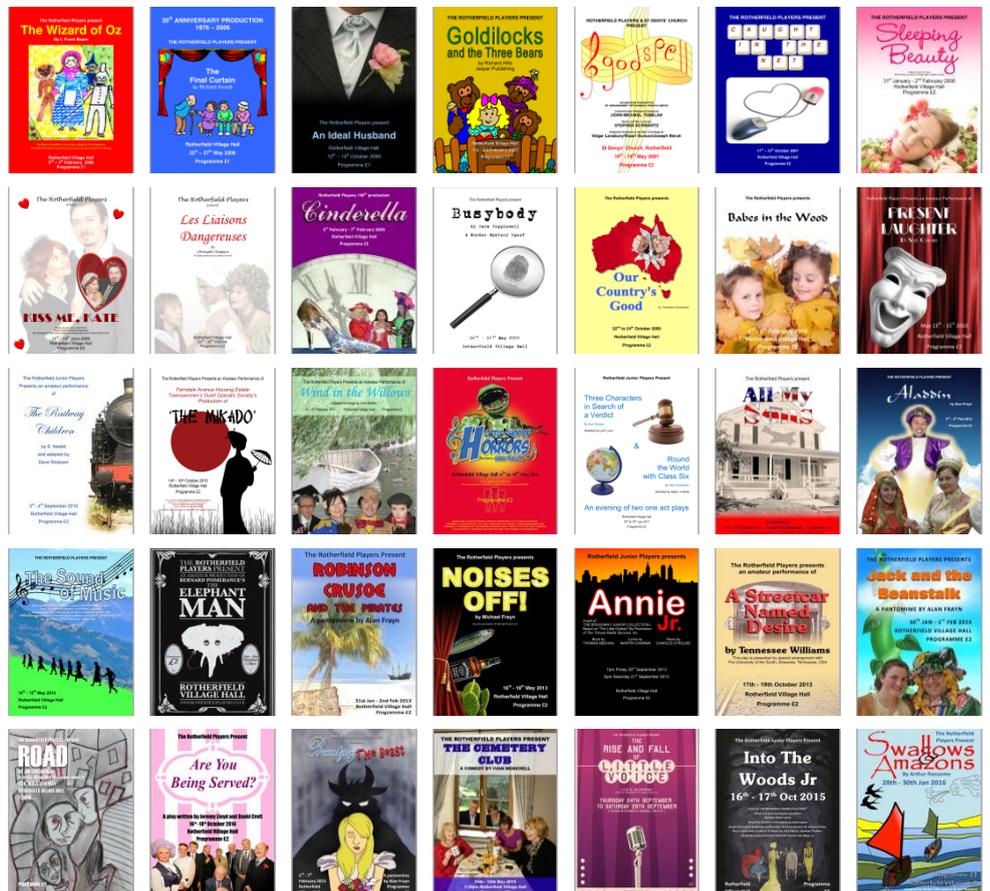
The Wizard of Oz	2006	Farndale Avenue Housing	2010	A Streetcar Named Desire	2013
The Final Curtain	2006	Estate Townswomen's		Jack and the Beanstalk	2014
An Ideal Husband	2006	Guild Production of		Road	2014
Goldilocks and the Three Bears	2007	The Mikado		Are You Being Served?	2014
Godspell	2007	Wind in the Willows	2011	Beauty and the Beast	2015
Bard from the King's Arms	2007	Little Shop of Horrors	2011	The Cemetery Club	2015
Caught in the Net	2007	Three Characters in	2011	The Rise and Fall of Little Voice	2015
Sleeping Beauty	2008	Search of a Verdict & Round the World with Class Six (Junior Players)		Into The Woods Jr (Junior Players)	2015
Kiss Me Kate	2008	All My Sons	2011		
Les Liaisons Dangereuses	2008	Aladdin	2012		
Cinderella	2009	The Sound of Music	2012		
Busybody	2009	The Elephant Man	2012		
Our Country's Good	2009	Robinson Crusoe and the Pirates	2013		
Babes in the Wood	2010	Noises Off	2013		
Present Laughter	2010	Annie Jr (Junior Players)	2013		
The Railway Children (Junior Players)	2010				

Productions go back as far as 1976 and a full list is on our website [www.rotherfieldplayers.co.uk](http://www.rotherfieldplayers.co.uk)

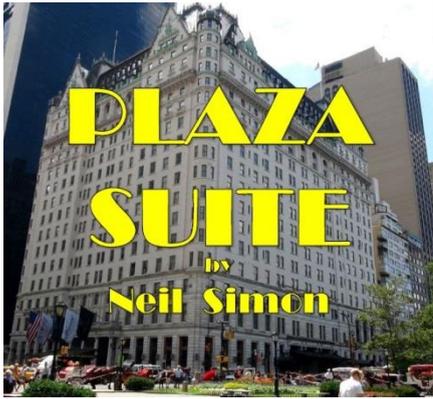
# Programme Design

Some 10 years back our programme designer, Gillian Earle, was persuaded by Dynamo Jo to create a digital programme for "The Wizard of Oz". When talent is recognised then further requests are made and this issue will be Gillian's 35th consecutive programme. Alas Gillian has now told us that 10 years is enough and this will be her last. We don't know what she will do in her life instead but we do wish to thank her very much for all of her design work and compiling over the past decade. It's been brilliant.

We have been very lucky to receive an immediate offer, to design and compile our programmes, from Stephen Knowlden; often known for his work with the Mayfield Phoenix company.



# Next Production



**12th to 14th May 2016**

**Reading and familiarisation**

Monday 1st February at 7:30pm  
Memorial Hall

**Auditions**

Friday 5th February at 7:30 pm  
Rotherfield Village Hall

Three one-act comedy plays made famous by the film starring Walter Matthau. The action takes place in Suite 719 of the famous Plaza Hotel in New York.

**PLAY 1 - Visitor from Mamaroneck**

Sam & Karen meet up on their Wedding Anniversary, in Suite 719, where they honeymooned 23 years ago. Things turn sour when Sam owns up to an affair with his secretary. The interplay of sharp, biting dialogue sustains this story of a marriage on the rocks.

**PLAY 2 - Visitor from Hollywood**

After three unsuccessful marriages, Jesse is looking for fresh fields and invites a childhood sweetheart (now

married with three children) to Suite 719 for a chat – (for “chat”, read “sex”!) Jesse’s smooth, silky experienced small talk is delightful to behold, with Muriel getting closer to the horizontal as the play draws to a close.

**PLAY 3 - Visitor from Forest Hills**

This is a hilarious scenario, where the bride locks herself in the bathroom, refusing to come out for her wedding. With hundreds of guests drinking his champagne downstairs, Roy descends into an apoplectic state, trying to reason with his daughter and wife. It is a superb, gleeful situation, with highly charged emotions running riot!

# 2016 Charity

Each Year the Players have collected for a specific charity. This has included Proteus Syndrome and Taylor-Made Dreams. Last year we collected for the Rotherfield Branch of the Royal British Legion and we have been delighted to present them with a cheque for £1,067 at their Christmas meeting. This year we are turning our attention to our audience. Yes you, because we want to increase the height of the stage and thus your ability to see the actors. It is said that the view of the stage can be limited beyond the first three rows.

This wonderful Village Hall has been built in several stages. Stage one was completed in 1980 when the basic outline was created with a low sloping ceiling and no stage for the actors. One could say that badminton was very interesting as the shuttlecocks had to be kept low. The Players built their stage on blocks and scaffolding at each production so the actors climbed two feet each time that they entered the action.

The stage extension and cellar was added in due course and the ceiling above the stage was the same low sloping affair of the main hall. The



stage was built at a height of two feet which was the highest that could be achieved.

In 1994 it was noticed that the roof timbers of the main hall had started to come apart. One could say it was a catastrophe but the badminton club would not agree with that. The Village Hall committee raised the finance and the main hall was rebuilt to the current specification that you see above you. Shuttlecocks were then seen to traverse the hall in freedom (well almost).

Alas, the ceiling above the stage remained at the same height as the original hall and thus the stage has to remain at a height of two feet. We would like it to be 3 feet 6 inches,

which would greatly improve your viewing experience and reduce the craning of necks. However, in order to do this, the proscenium arch needs to be raised and to facilitate this, so the actual roof height above the stage. In addition, whilst doing this, the opportunity arises to vastly increase the versatility of stage setting, props and scenery movement, and proper ‘in stage’ lighting.

Our aim is to raise the external roof to the height, at least, of the main hall, install steel beams to support our stage sets and lights and raise the stage to a height that greatly improves your view. We need to raise about £100,000 to complete the work. Inevitably, we will be looking for grants and we will be organising fund-raising events. However, we are also asking for your help and would appreciate your contribution in the buckets provided. Rotherfield already has one of the most dynamic and progressive amateur drama groups in the area. These improvements will enable us to scale even greater heights.



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Email: [members@rotherfieldplayers.co.uk](mailto:members@rotherfieldplayers.co.uk)

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