

April 2008

The picture opposite shows Rosemary House and myself (Carol Evans) in our new roles as forensic scientists. We were snapped at the recent CSI Murder Challenge at Eynsham Hall when we went along as guinea pigs for Art Deco Productions who wanted to pilot their new corporate entertainment game.

In all, 12 people from various drama groups turned up for the event (which, incidentally, required no acting on our part.) We were divided into two teams and given a briefing by a real forensic scientist on how to collect and analyse fingerprints using a variety of special dusts, examine blood splatters, collect hair samples for DNA, plus a load more really interesting stuff. An actor-detective explained the scenario. A guy had been murdered and, just like on *The Bill*, a display had been set up with photos of suspects and their motives. Our job was to find the culprit. Then, kitted out in full forensic gear, we were let loose into the 'scene of crime' to make our investigations.

We were each allocated particular areas of expertise. Rosemary and I opted for the fingerprinting since it required two people, looked important – and fairly straightforward. Our first mistake. It turned out to be the most difficult brief of the lot, what with the grey magnetic fingerprint dust getting everywhere, dirtying us, our equipment and the evidence, working in gloves that made the delicate business of transferring the prints to clear plastic sheets near impossible and our goggles misting up because our masks weren't on tight enough.

The actual analysis back at the 'lab' proved to be even more of a challenge and, I have to say (and I think Rosemary will agree with me), we were pretty hopeless at it. We did manage to correctly identify one fingerprint – but only because we guessed.



This was a competition between the two teams. Needless to say, we lost because, frankly, the rest of the team were useless too - despite a lot of bluster on their part. But it was a real fun afternoon which taught us a lot too.

We now have huge respect for the real forensic scientists. Those actors in *CSI*, *Silent Witness* and *Waking the Dead* make it all look so easy but those Plods in *Midsomer Murders* should be shot... barging into crime scenes without protective clothing, picking up evidence without wearing gloves.... The two of us may have occasionally obliterated something vital with our over-active dusting technique, but we sure as hell didn't tamper with, or compromise the evidence.



Back to general Chiltern Player matters. Rehearsals have been going well for *Nearer to Shakespeare* and tickets at £6 each for the performances on April 18/19 and 24/25 are now available.

As most people will know by now, *Sleeping Beauty*, Tiffany Saul's first panto directing venture was a huge success, netting £872.18 profit. A sum of £150 has been set aside to give to a charity of Tiff's choice.

The Festival season is almost upon us and Rosemary has now assembled her cast and crew for *The Dress*. We have entered three festivals: the Kenton (May 6 - 10), Abingdon (June 1 - 7) and Wallingford June 23 - 28). Everyone will be notified of the actual performance dates so you can come along and support.

Thoughts are now turning towards the autumn production, which is scheduled to take place on November 21/22 and 28/29. So – suggestions for a play and someone to direct it will be gratefully received by the committee.

Our treasurer reports that there are still subs outstanding. You know who you are so can you get your cheques to Roger soonest. These were due last September.

The recent theatre trip to Oxford to see *Spies* was a great success – thanks to Peter O'Sullivan for organising excellent seats. He plans to arrange another theatre visit, this time, to The Watermill at Bagnor, near Newbury in the summer. Details coming soon.

The annual general meeting will be held on Friday, July 4 at Peppard Memorial Hall. Peter O'Sullivan will be standing down after four years as chairman. Jill Greenwood, who has been secretary for, she thinks, ten years or more, will also be putting away her secretary's notepad. With two key people leaving, it is imperative that there are replacements to carry on their good work. It's not too soon to be thinking about nominations for their posts.

Finally, here is a date for all your diaries. The O'Sullivan Family Garden Fete will be held this year on June 1 between 2 and 5 pm. Those who have been before, will agree that this annual event is a great afternoon out that raises stacks of cash for the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign. It takes place in the lovely grounds of Peter's home, Kildare, Wood Lane, Kidmore End.

That's all for now. Carol Evans