



## The award for the best production goes to Chiltern Players with The Donahue Sisters!

**W**ELL, as everyone knows by now, we won the top prize at the Wallingford Festival and our picture shows director Rosemary House collecting the trophy from adjudicator Peter English (right) and general manager of the Sinodun Players Phil Burton.

Rosemary is no stranger to Wallingford awards, having collected several over the years for her innovative youth group productions. It's great to see this fine directing talent achieving top honours for the adults too.

The adjudicator described the production as 'excellent.' He was lavish in his praise, complimenting the acting, set and sound effects, which he thought were 'splendid.' He said: "This

was a difficult and demanding play which they did extremely well."

Overall, we lost only seven points. And we also managed to set up, do the play and strike set with one minute to spare from the allotted 50 minutes. Not bad going. eh!

We can now claim The Donahue Sisters as one of our key works. A production, directed by Amy Warrick, won the youth award at Wallingford about six years ago.

The Corn Exchange is about to undergo major refurbishment and this year's Festival could be the last in its current format.

Those of us who have been going for a number of years will miss it. It's a great opportunity to learn tips about



directing and acting (yes, even for those of us who won't go on the stage!)

Still on the Festival, congratulations to Donahue Sister Helen who did a clean sweep with Wallingford gongs. She also appeared in the Goring Gap Players' hilarious production that won the Commended Award and Punters' Prize. (Loved the wig and wrinkled stockings, Helen – a great look!)

**H**e was once described in a local newspaper review as 'an enigmatic man of mystery.' Now others have been seduced by Richard Warrick's on-stage talents. The former Player has been selected to do a one-year MA course in Acting at the Arts Educational Schools in Chiswick.

The very comprehensive audition involved dance and movement, followed by story-telling and improv plus two audition speeches, one Shakespeare, one contemporary.

From the hordes who entered, Richard made the last 25 which was whittled down to a final seven.

Richard tells me that the course involves movement, voice and text work with a production in London at the end of year in front of some of the capital's top agents.

Good luck mate from all the Chiltern Players – and when you're behind the bar of the Queen Vic in EastEnders, we'll look on proudly and say, 'he started with us.'

**Look forward to seeing you and Amy at our next production.**

**O**n the subject of former Players, many of the (forgive me) older members will remember Sally Dexter who went on to join the National Theatre after leaving Chiltern Edge School and King James's College.

Sally has worked solidly ever since at the National, RSC, on TV. She was Nancy in the last West End revival of Oliver! She has now landed a role in the smash-hit musical Billy Elliott, as the dancing teacher Mrs Wilkinson (played by Julie Walters in the film).

I spoke to Sally recently and she is thrilled with the part, for which she has a year's contract. She has had to take a crash course in ballet but, she said, it was having the opportunity to learn this discipline that attracted her to the role.

**I** hope that everyone has by now logged on to Matt O'Sullivan's new website, [www.chilternplayers.co.uk](http://www.chilternplayers.co.uk).

If so, you will all agree that it is excellent: factual, to the point and, importantly, easy to negotiate.

To keep it updated, Matt needs regular updates on what's going on, so please keep him informed (me, too, remember, so I can include items in the newsletter.)

We've also been impressed with the posters and programmes that Matt



has designed for us over the past year. Thanks, Matt.

**W**ork has been carrying on apace at Peppard Hall with weekend gangs beavering away to update lighting and sound cabling.

Colin has installed two new dimmers so he can control and make use of all 12 channels on his lighting board, whereas previously he could only use six.

He has also installed new cabling to lighting bars. Without getting too technical, this essentially means that for a particular production, all it will take is to hang the light, plug in a socket on the lighting bar and then connect the cable in the loft. Easy (or so Colin says.)

There is more work to do over time, but meanwhile, it's a great start.

Soundwise, John Evans reports that work is progressing on the sound wiring which should mean fewer spaghetti-like leads hanging around, thus allowing easier access for setting up and striking.

We have also embraced the 21<sup>st</sup> century with new software that will revolutionise the sound system.

The new computerised system was used successfully at Wallingford and would have been just as successful at the Abingdon Festival were it not for interference from the organisers.

**T**he Autumn production is to be **Natural Causes**, a black comedy on a theme of suicide to be directed by Peter O'Sullivan. Dates are November 17, 18, 24, 25.

**When originally produced in 1992 in Windsor, it starred two local actors – George Cole and Simon Williams. I wonder whether our director will be brave enough to invite them along to our First Night? Just a thought.**

**C**ome the summer, come the fêtes and the best round here really has to be that of the O'Sullivan family.

Last year's event raised a bundle for the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign, so let's make sure the 2006 do is just as successful. This year's fiesta will be held on Sunday, 27 August between 2 and 5 pm at Kildare, Wood Lane, Kidmore End.

**F**inally, the annual general meeting will be held at St Michael's Hall on Wednesday, 2 August, 7.30 for a prompt start at 8 pm. It will be followed by drinks and refreshments – all contributions welcome.

STOP PRESS: Congratulations to Pete Smithson on landing the role of Lenny in Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* with the Sinodun Players. Pete says he can't wait to explore the darker side of Lenny's character and he is looking forward to

# The Chiltern Player

Page 4



the challenge of Pinter's wonderful,  
long monologues. Performances are  
October 17 – 21.

Carol Evans