

THE
UNEXPECTED
GUEST

AGATHA
CHRISTIE

7:30pm

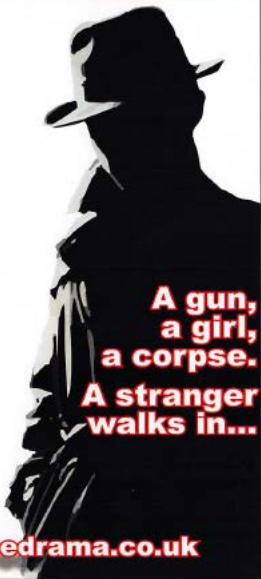
21-23 OCT

2:30pm

Sat Mat 23rd

TIVOLI
WIMBORNE

Directed by
David Pile



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a girl,
a corpse.

A stranger
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friends and neighbours ?

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by Hugh Whitmore
Directed by
Phyllis Spencer

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WIMBORNE DRAMA

Hello and welcome to the Tivoli Theatre for this performance of Agatha Christie's play *The Unexpected Guest*. This is probably not one of Christie's better-known plays and as such we hope that not too many of you will know the ending.

First performed in 1958, the play was written directly for the stage and not, like many of Christie's works, adapted from a book. It contains the usual array of red herrings and I hope that it will keep many of you guessing for the whole performance. Since it was written, over 50 years ago, social attitudes have changed enormously, especially with regard to women, smoking, and mental and physical illness, and this play certainly serves to illustrate some of those changes. The main purpose of course is to provide you with an entertaining evening. I hope you will enjoy the performance by our excellent cast who have worked hard over the past weeks to explore their characters, make suggestions (generally not too rude), and work together to provide you with a production worthy of gracing a professional theatre.

It would be impossible to put on this production without the help of many other people in getting it together: designing and building the set, effects, lighting, props and transport, and not forgetting the stage manager. They are listed elsewhere in this programme and I would ask you to please to look at their names when you come to read the cast list, as everyone involved deserves recognition for their part in what I hope will be a successful production. Thank you also to the staff and management of the Tivoli Theatre.

Some of you may have noticed that this is not the play that was originally to have been produced at this time. This is mainly because of cost constraints.

As is normal with most amateur companies performing in a professional theatre, costs keep increasing with productions costing many thousands of pounds. We are therefore left with the dilemma of what type of play to put on which will satisfy our audience and, at the same time as being affordable, provide a challenge for our actors. So we are asking you to help by saying what plays you would like to see, comedies, serious drama, costume drama, etc. and which you would be most likely to support.

But for now just sit back and relax and enjoy the appearance of *The Unexpected Guest*.

David Pile



CAST NOTES...



Tracey Nicholls

It doesn't seem like nine years ago that I joined the group, the time has just flown, which must be because I have been having so much fun! I am delighted to be back on stage with Wimborne Drama in this super Agatha Christie mystery. I confess that I am always the last person to work out "who dunnit" and *The Unexpected Guest* was no exception, Christie took me in completely and I hope that she keeps you guessing too. Rehearsals have been thoroughly enjoyable, with good camaraderie between the cast and crew from day one, and frequent fits of giggles to break the drama and suspense. A

particular source of amusement has been Val's entrances as the physically frail Mrs Warwick who, upon hearing her cue line, could be seen dashing across the rear of the rehearsal room, walking stick flying through the air, before coming to an abrupt halt and making a perfectly sedate entrance! I would like to take this opportunity to thank all my family and friends who have come to support me and Wimborne Drama for this production - the drinks are on me!

I hope that you enjoy the show.



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Richard Neal

This is the third occasion that I have worked on a thriller with David Pile, following *Witness for the Prosecution* (also by Agatha Christie) and *Dial M for Murder* (by Frederick Knott). It is a genre that I have liked ever since my youth, when I spent my Christmases with Professor Plum, Colonel Mustard and Miss Scarlett. As my character Michael Starkwedder says: "I have always had a secret longing to see how I could get on with a detective story in real life." I love the period too, the 40s and 50s, in which so many of the best thrillers seem to be set. One gets the chance to cut a dash in a sharp suit or tweeds, and don a tifer. It is always a scream playing opposite my wife, Chrissie. We have performed in a few plays together, but don't often get to appear on stage at the same time, so the three pages of dialogue we share here will be greatly treasured, I can assure you.



Chrissie Neal

The director has typecast me as a housekeeper – again! I don't quite know whether to take it as a compliment or not. It all began a few years ago with Mrs Swabb and her Hoover in *Habeas Corpus* – a "peach of a part" as a friend described it at the time. Then there was Mrs Mackenzie in *Witness for the Prosecution* – hard of hearing, short of sight, and a little batty. And of course, the mother of all housekeepers, the sinister Mrs Danvers in *Rebecca* – now she was a joy to play. What do I think of Miss Bennett? Well, she is very efficient and very loyal, a little bit dull perhaps, but I like to think that she has a secret past, and in her day may have turned a few heads. She admits to once being rather "fond" of the master of the house...and maybe he was "fond" of her...



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CAST NOTES...



Val Mantle

After a break of a few years, it has been a pleasure to be involved with Wimborne Drama again. I am enjoying playing Mrs Warwick in *The Unexpected Guest* and look forward to the twice weekly rehearsals.

At the first read-through of the script, I didn't guess who "dunnit" until the very last page - let's hope the audience is kept in suspense too!

Rob Cording

I joined Wimborne Drama in 2007, one of the best decisions I ever made. I have had several amazing parts including Tom Ripley in *The Talented Mr Ripley*, Pip in *Great Expectations*, and another one tonight.

I auditioned for a part in *The Unexpected Guest* as I have never done an Agatha Christie play before and, having seen the likes of Poirot and Miss Marple on television, it looked a great deal of fun. Rehearsing this play certainly has been that.

When I told friends and family that I would be playing Jan Warwick, and told them of his 'kind' nature, I was shocked to hear so many reply, "Oh, no acting needed there then huh?". However, this has been one of the most challenging parts I have ever played and I sincerely hope, as the play progresses, you will understand what I mean!

There is no doubt that my great aunt will be in the audience at one performance this week and I would like to take this opportunity to thank her and her friends (my official fan-club) for supporting me in every play I have ever been in. I hope you all enjoy tonight's show but can you guess 'Who dunnit?'.



Anthony Parkinson

I joined Wimborne Drama in 2009 after a spell away from the stage to start a family. Previously I have worked with Big Little Theatre, Theatreworks, Impact Theatre and Bournemouth University. One of my favourite previous roles was playing Father Mullarkey in Mary O'Malley's *Once a Catholic*, and recently I played Sherlock Holmes in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. I love Agatha Christie's work so it's great to be part of this play. I'm playing a

prospective Liberal MP who seems to have all the answers. My favourite lines are those delivered to Angell, the valet of the house.

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CAST

Richard Warwick
Laura Warwick
Michael Starkwedder
Miss Bennett
Jan Warwick
Mrs Warwick
Henry Angell
Julian Farrar
Sergeant Cadwallader
and Inspector Thomas

Bob Hucklesby
Tracey Nicholls
Richard Neal
Chrissie Neal
Rob Cording
Val Mantle
Michael J Smith
Anthony Parkinson
Colin Pile
Paul Dodman

The action of the play takes place in Richard Warwick's study, in an old house in South Wales near the Bristol channel.

Act 1 Scene 1 – 11:30 pm in November

Act 1 Scene 2 – Next morning

Act 2 Scene 1 – Late afternoon the same day

Unexpected Guest

Thanks to:

- Members of Wimborne Drama for help with set construction, properties, programmes, costumes etc.
- The Tivoli Theatre production team for lighting and technical assistance
- The British Red Cross Society for the loan of a wheelchair
- Wimborne Garden Centre for the loan of plants
- Doubles Food and Drink
- Eclectia Costumes

The Unexpected Guest

By Agatha Christie

Directed by David Pile

CREW

Set & Sound Design
Stage Manager
Props
ASM
Transport
Prompt
Dialect coach
Tivoli Production Manager

Colin Pile
Phyllis Spencer
Jan Stevenson
Verena Smith
Steve Symonds
Carol Bruton
Marg Pugsley
Phil Wood



Michael J Smith

I started acting when I was 15 years of age which, as you will see from the photograph, was a very, very long time ago! Since those young days I have never stopped acting and, fortunately, my whole life has been involved with the Theatre either as an actor (very little money), director (a very little more) and finally as a Theatre Accountant (at last we can eat!). I was intrigued to be asked to take on Henry Angell as I have never played anything quite like this before and now feel that I know him very well. In the late 1950's when the play is set he must have found it very difficult to fit in and work cannot have been easy thus having 'very difficult' patients. I have really enjoyed working with such a talented and committed cast, not to mention the director. I SAID NOT TO MENTION THE DIRECTOR !!! Seriously Dave is a fabulous and understanding director - love him to bits! Me?...I hope to play a few more parts before I finally pack my make-up box away and retire.



Paul Dodman

I thoroughly enjoyed playing the duplicitous Leonard Vole in last year's *Witness for the Prosecution*, and this time I'm very much looking forward to playing a detective. Inspector Thomas seems to be a little slow on the uptake to me, and he has a very bad habit of leaving guns lying around where anyone could get hold of them, rather than locking them away. Indeed, in one review he was described as, "having the intellect of a retarded house-plant". He also seems unduly fascinated with the contents of the victim's bedroom - leaving me to speculate as to exactly what Richard Warwick keeps in there.

Needless to say, the police aren't exactly bathed in glory by Mrs Christie and there's no Marple or Poirot to hand over to for the denouement, but we're trying our best! It's been great fun to rehearse with such a lovely cast and crew, although my fear of one-sided stage telephone conversations does get tested a little...

Colin Pile

I have been involved in all aspects of theatre in my 22 years in amateur productions, from being on stage to helping backstage with sound and lighting. This is my third set design and it always seems as though there is something to do, from making sure it fits the stage to adding the picture hooks.

My on-stage role is Sergeant Cadwallader, a welsh police sergeant more interested in poetry and the beauty of the landscape than in doing his job.



This is the first time I have had to try and speak with a welsh accent, I am more used to having to be American when doing musicals. I have tried to keep the tone light so as not to loose the clarity of the lines, and just to give the impression that the Sergeant comes from Wales. I hope there are no critical welsh people in the audience.

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We all like to think of ourselves as accomplished character actors, but Wimborne Drama's Bob Hucklsby is digging out rather a specialised niche. In *The Unexpected Guest*, he finds himself cast once again in the demanding role of "body". The plot hangs on the death of Richard Warwick, big game hunter and head of a rather resentful household, all of whom make excellent suspects with varied and intriguing motives for bumping him off. None is more likely to face restitution for the crime than his wife Laura, whom we first meet standing over the body with a smoking gun. At this point a dashing stranger, disorientated by swirling Welsh fog, arrives at the isolated house seeking shelter for the night. He takes pity on the girl, and the play recounts his efforts to keep her from the noose.

"You might think being a body would be dead easy," says Bob, "but it's not just a case of lying doggo."

Probably his most challenging brush with death was as Mr Purdue, the suicidal depressive in Alan Bennet's *Habeous Corpus*.

"I hung around in full view throughout the interval, artistically dangling from a noose while the audience purchased its ice-creams. It was certainly highly strung, as one false move could have meant curtains."

No such elevated risks are required for *The Unexpected Guest* however, as throughout his lengthy appearance Richard Warwick sits silently cooling in his wheelchair.

"It should be quite comfy really," says Bob, "as long as I don't nod off — to wake with a start at the wrong moment would be a dead loss!"

In his non-speaking part though, Bob can guarantee that whatever else happens he won't be corpsing.

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Why not drop in on us? You certainly wouldn't feel like an unexpected guest at one of our regular meetings on the last Wednesday of each month. You can also find out more by reading about us at our website:

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Wimborne Drama gives a warm welcome to anyone who would like to become a new member, and prides itself on the opportunities it can offer to willing new-comers. Actors, advertisers, designers, prompters, property masters, sound- light- and effects- people, stage managers, assistant stage managers, photographers, woodworkers, electricians, play readers, directors.... people getting up to all sorts of business are in our club.

We also enjoy the loyal and enthusiastic support of our patrons, entitled by their special membership to advance notification of plays, a priority booking service, a quarterly newsletter, Friday refreshments, and invitations to our other events throughout the year. Tracey Nicholls, keeps an open welcome for enquiries on **01202 889768**, or via e-mail address:

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Pack of Lies

What does it take to be a spy? Hugh White-more's famous play lays bare the emotional aftermath of betrayal. In *Pack of Lies*, Barbara Jackson's best friends the Krogers are brought under suspicion when M15 arrives to suggest they may not after all be the jolly Canadian neighbours Barbara believes, but Soviet agents instead. To assist their enquiries, M15 commandeers the Jackson's home for covert surveillance of their friends across the road, and Barbara, enmeshed in the ensuing toils of deceit, finds herself questioning the very meaning of loyalty. Could her closest friends really have been cynically duping her? Is she herself a traitor, pretending nothing has changed as she helps officialdom secretly peer and pry into her friend's lives?

The tense atmosphere of treachery takes its toll pitilessly on the ordinary Jackson family until, at the play's climax, just what it takes to be a spy is finally revealed.

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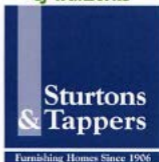
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