

CAST LIST

May..... Lucy Booth
Tom..... Benjamin Churchill
Arthur..... David Wells
Ralph..... Alex Chard
Eva..... Maria Evans
Rivers..... Malcolm Emms
Annie..... Penny Pomroy
Sarah..... Jo Wright
Bertha..... Suzy Saker
Reggie..... Rafael Precht

Director..... Dan Clucas
Producer..... Sarah Amsden
Stage Manager..... Joyce Miller
Lighting..... Chris Cooper, Angela Allen
Sound..... Nick Cooper
Graphic design..... Simon Blanchard
Box Office..... Frayed Knot Committee
Front of house..... Tony Evans and lovely volunteers

THANKS TO...

Beechwood Fine Foods,
Anne Chatterley, Rob Farrow,
Tim Amsden, Eileen Reece,
Simon Ruck, Caroline Colebrook,
Ed Amsden and our sponsor
Matthew Homes.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

On the eve of the First World War the young men of Accrington hear Kitchener's call for a New Army. Accrington was the smallest town anywhere in England to raise a Pals Volunteer Brigade, in which all the recruits came from the same community. When they arrive in France, the brutal reality of the trenches is beyond anything they are prepared for. And back home amongst the women they leave behind – their mothers, wives, daughters, lovers – nothing will ever be the same again.

At the heart of the play THE ACCRINGTON PALS lies a devastating statistic. In just ten days during the Great War, the Lancashire town of Accrington sent a thousand of its men and boys to war; in just ten minutes, most of them were slaughtered on the Somme. In 1916, the Somme Offensive was intended to hasten the end of the war and defeat Germany. It was the largest battle on the Western Front. More than three million men fought and one million men were wounded or killed, making it one of the bloodiest battles in human history.

After bombarding the German defences and exploding the huge "Hawthorn Mine" directly underneath the German line, British Command believed the Germans would be routed. But with a ten-minute delay between the barrage and the attack, the Germans were able to return to their positions and defend their trenches with machine guns against the advancing force. Had the British run and not walked, it is believed that many may have survived and won the battle. But they followed orders and walked. This led to the Battle of the Somme being one of the greatest disasters of modern warfare.

My grandfather was in the Lancashire regiment and fought in the Battle of Passchendaele. He survived but probably

had similar experiences. During the little time that I had with him when I was young, he never talked about it.

This well-researched piece of drama was commissioned by the RSC in 1981 and has been a popular work ever since. My thanks to Sarah, my producer; to Nick and Chris for, as ever, their wonderful technical support; to Joyce and everyone else who has helped to make this a very enjoyable experience. Hope you enjoy the show.

TRING and WWI

When war was declared, six hundred men from Tring volunteered immediately or shortly afterwards. Over eighty of these volunteers came from the ranks of the local branch of The Church Lads' Brigade. After the Military Service Act came into force, three hundred more men were conscripted and the total then represented one-fifth of the population of the town. Of the nine hundred men serving, Tring lost one hundred and seven, a casualty rate more or less typical of the country as a whole.

Of the 107 names listed on the Great War section of the Tring War Memorial, 92 were killed in action on the Western Front or died after being invalided to the United Kingdom from the Western Front suffering from wounds, gassing, or disease. The remaining fifteen died in other theatres of war or while on service in the United Kingdom.

Tring was one of the very first towns to erect a memorial to the men lost to the war. When the names were inscribed on the memorial, the list included seven men who had won decorations – one Victoria Cross, one Distinguished Conduct Medal, three Military Crosses (one being with bar) and three Military Medals. In 1914 many of the soldiers from Tring had left for France with the Herts Territorial Battalion which took part in several

engagements with the Guards Brigade in the Second Division. These men fought at the second Battle of Ypres, where the battalion lost all its officers and all but one hundred and thirty of its men. Later in that same year, the battalion saw action on the Somme, again losing all its replacement officers as well as five hundred men. Other Tring men in the Bedfordshire Regiment also saw action on the Somme, the 7th Battalion advancing at 7.30 am on the first day of the battle (1st July 1916). The Regimental history relates that the objective of capturing the first-line system of German trenches was achieved, but the price paid had been the loss of all its officers.

Tring's promptness in erecting its war memorial set an example for many other towns and villages in the country. This was commended in several newspapers including the Evening News in June 1919, and in October of the same year the Cardiff Evening Express printed a picture of the memorial with the headline: "AS IT SHOULD BE", the caption beneath stating: "*The only War Memorial as yet properly completed and with the names inscribed. Our picture shows the beautiful War Memorial at Tring, Hertfordshire.*"



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THE CAST



Benjamin Churchill: Tom

Benjamin first played roles in WEST SIDE STORY, THE SOUND OF MUSIC and THE WIZARD OF OZ. He has since focused more on straight acting

— in the hope of eventually making it his profession — performing with various theatre companies in and around Hertfordshire. Notably: Frayed Knot, Berkhamsted Theatre Company and Tring Theatre Company. You may have seen Benjamin as: Orlando ‘Alan’ Dangle in ONE MAN, TWO GUVNORS (Frayed Knot, 2016); Joey, Brink and the Soldier in Jim Cartwright’s iconic ROAD (BTC, 2017); Potts in Jez Butterworth’s masterpiece MOJO (Frayed Knot, 2017), a role, incidentally, he had always dreamt of playing; Bernard in DEATH OF A SALESMAN (TTC, 2017) and, most recently, Fyedka in a production of FIDDLER ON THE ROOF at the Theatre Royal Windsor. His most challenging, but most rewarding, role to date was in Berkhamsted Theatre Company’s NODA Award-winning production of Arthur Miller’s classic THE CRUCIBLE, where he played John Proctor to packed-out audiences at the Court Theatre. Benjamin’s first role with Frayed Knot was as Raleigh in R.C. Sherriff’s quintessential WW1 play JOURNEY’S END (2014), opening on the centenary of the war itself. It is his absolute pleasure to round off this four-year journey with another WW1-based masterpiece.



Alex Chard: Ralph

Alex has been acting since age 9, first appearing at the Court Theatre as Jesus in JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR. 2016’s ONE MAN, TWO GUVNORS marked Alex’s

first collaboration with Frayed Knot (as Stanley Stubbers) followed by Jez Butterworth’s MOJO as Skinny. Last year he swapped Tring Court Theatre for Barons Court Theatre to appear as Dante in the acclaimed DANTE’S DIVINE COMEDY. He is also a regular at the Pendley Shakespeare Festival, most recently as Catesby in RICHARD III.

Alex, along with the rest of the cast and crew is humbled to mark the Great War Centenary by staging this play.



Maria Evans: Eva

Maria started performing at the age of 7 and hasn’t looked back since! She has appeared in pantomimes at the Court Theatre every year since then and many

youth shows including SPAMALOT, SPRING AWAKENING and RENT. Maria achieved a Distinction for her Grade 8 Musical Theatre singing exam, and is now working towards her First Diploma. She is very excited to make a change from being in musicals and hopes you enjoy the play!



Malcolm Emms: Rivers

Malcolm was cast as The Tin Man aged thirteen and it got right under his skin. Producing credits include REVOLTING RHYMES. Writing credits include BEAUTY AND THE BEAST, THE FROG

PRINCE and RUMPELSTILTSKIN. He has toured with Silly Cow and The Dumb Waiter and has acted in many Frayed Knot productions including THE LADYKILLERS, JOURNEY’S END and most recently, ONE MAN, TWO GUV’NORS.



Jo Wright: Sarah

Jo’s first introduction to Pendley Court Theatre was in Alice in Wonderland directed by Mike Code. More recently she has enjoyed the challenge of playing Daisy in DAISY PULLS IT OFF at the Boxmoor Playhouse,

before returning to Pendley Shakespeare Festival to play Leonata in MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING and The Duchess of York in RICHARD III. She experienced her second directorial role in September, directing Tring Youth Theatre Project’s RENT. Jo has felt privileged to work with this talented cast and production team. She admits the Northern accent was a challenge but has enjoyed it none the less!



Lucy Booth: May

Ellen Cecilia Foster was born in 1916 in a poor area of Manchester. They can be ‘very vile’ in Salford but my Nana was the original tartar. A strong, independent woman who always had something to

say. Like May she wanted to make something of her life and became a female time-trial cyclist in 1930s. This powerful and important true story is for women like her. Unsung female stalwarts who picked themselves up and carried on when unimaginable heartbreak would threaten to crush most. She was 102 on the 10th November. Still gutsy. Still controversial. Still fabulous.



Suzy Saker: Bertha

After graduating from Hull University in 2005 with a drama degree, Suzy stopped acting for over 10 years to focus on her first love of writing. Moving to Berkhamsted in 2015 changed all that when

she discovered the local theatre scene and she’s since appeared in local productions of EVITA, ROAD, PRIDE & PREJUDICE and CHESS. Suzy is delighted to be part of the wonderful Frayed Knot team performing in this moving play, and feels deeply privileged to be able to commemorate the bravery of the Pals and their townsfolk so close to the centenary anniversary of Armistice Day.



Penny Pomroy: Annie

Trained professionally as a dancer Penny is normally seen treading the boards for Hemel Hempstead Theatre Company. ACCRINGTON PALS is her first production for Frayed Knot and she is delighted

to have been given the opportunity to be in this wonderful play exactly 10 years after playing Bertha in the award-winning HHTC production. It is something of a ‘pals reunion’, as Lucy Booth was also in that production.

Theatre credits include: Fiddler - FIDDLER ON THE ROOF, Bertha - THE ACCRINGTON PALS, Meg - BRIGADOON, Lady Laxington- “DICK BARTON, SECRET AGENT, Mrs Pankhurst - OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR and Cinderella’s Stepmother -INTO THE WOODS all for Hemel Hempstead Theatre Company. Dance Hall Hostess- SWEET CHARITY (KLLOC), Liza Minelli - FORBIDDEN BROADWAY (Panda Players), Helga - ‘ALLO, ‘ALLO (Tring Theatre Company), Marjorie Armitage - THE WEDDING RECEPTION MURDER MYSTERY (Ubiquitous Theatre), Jemima Puddleduck - BEATRIX POTTER TEA PARTY for Amersham Festival of Arts 2018 (Venture Quest Productions)

Penny is an experienced choral singer having sung for several years with The Watford Philharmonic Chorus and is currently a member of the choir of St John’s Church, Boxmoor.



Rafael Precht: Reggie

Rafael first appeared with Frayed Knot in 2012 when he played Rooster Byron’s son and Lucy Booth played his mum. Since then quite a lot has happened and now Raffle is older with lots of youth theatre productions under his belt.

He is having a great time in his second Frayed Knot production.



Dan Clucas: Director

Dan has played many parts at the Court Theatre including Rooster Johnny Byron in Jerusalem, Osbourne in Journey’s End, Randle McMurphy in One Flew

Over the Cuckoo’s Nest and Francis Henshall in One Man Two Guvnors. Other shows include Punks Not Dead, Calendar Girls, Road and Death of a Salesman. Most recently he played Lawrence Jameson in Dirty Rotten Scoundrels here at the Court and Teyve in Fiddler on the Roof at the Theatre Royal, Windsor. Elsewhere Dan has been in several Pendley Shakespeare productions and played Charles in Blithe Spirit for HHTC. His directing credits include: Mojo, History Boys, One Man Two Guvnors and See How They Run. He has co-written and directed a pantomime for the Limelight Theatre and devised a show around The Italian Job entitled “Hang On A Minute Lads I Got A Great Idea”.



David Wells: Arthur

Frayed Knot’s man in the Box Office is escaping onto the stage! Apart from selling tickets, David also helps with set building and deconstruction and,

after a ten year break from acting, appeared in ‘Allo ‘Allo at the Court Theatre earlier this year as Airman Carstairs. He may have even been convinced to play a panto baddie in the New Year... In real life, David is a historian and Heritage Officer for a charity. Having been involved in the global commemorations of the centenary of First World War over the past four years, he hopes this play serves as a reminder of the sacrifices made by the Pals battalions and the people and communities that they left behind.

Frayed Knot’s next production will be the play of the classic novel 1984 – This will be performed 3rd-6th April 2019