

Written by E Nesbit, adapted for the stage by Mike Kenny



NESTON  
PLAYERS

# The Railway Children



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## Chair of Neston Players

# Welcome



Welcome back! It has been 3 long years since our last production at The Civic Hall, so I am pleased to be able to say good evening Ladies, Gentleman and Children.

Our last production here at The Civic Hall was The Flint Street Nativity, directed by Carole Goodwin-Allan in 2019. It won awards from NODA; Jenny Clement - Angel Gabriel - for Best Female Comedy Performance and Best Programme compiled by Kerry Quayle, Production Manager.

It's Neston Players' 70th Jubilee this year and we could not be prouder of what we have achieved in Neston. Further on in the programme we have created a page that tells you a little of our history. In this very special year for us, we thought long and hard about what to perform.

It is also Jenny Agutter's 70th birthday this year. She of course starred in the 1970 film version of The Railway Children as Bobbie and reprises her role from this film 52 years later in the sequel, The Railway Children Return. It seems like a perfect choice to perform this iconic story.

During lock down we got inventive and used ZOOM to hold socials and do some play reading. We even had a ZOOM magic show. Some of our members got together and created beautiful bouquets and along with hampers and gifts, Neston Players delivered these to many of our local key-workers, including teachers, postal workers, nursing home staff. Once restrictions were lifted, we got together face-to-face for a few Play Reading Social evenings, which are always great fun and a wonderful way for members to keep in touch. We have read comedies, ghost stories and self-penned plays.

We could not wait to get back onto stage and with the Civic Hall still closed, in December 2021 we performed a self-penned play and self-penned panto for two sold out nights in the Neston Town Hall.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing Chair, John Lees who guided the society through a most difficult period, for which we are very grateful. I would also like to thank our dedicated committee who have also served the society so well.

**Enjoy the show!**  
**Martin Barker**  
Chair of Neston Players

In our 70th year Neston Players are delighted to be performing this globally successful and Olivier Award-winning adaptation of The Railway Children

## The Author

Mike Kenny is one of Britain's leading children's playwrights, and was included in the Independent on Sunday's list of Top Ten Living UK Playwrights. His adaptation of E. Nesbit's *The Railway Children* won an Oliver award for Best Entertainment and has toured worldwide.



## The Play

Mike Kenny's imaginative stage adaptation of E. Nesbit's much-loved children's classic. Famously filmed, this story of a prosperous Edwardian family - mother and three children - forced into near-penury in the rural north of England, captures the anxieties and exhilarations of childhood with great tenderness and insight.

As Mike Kenny says of his remarkably faithful adaptation, 'You don't need a real train to perform this play... the most powerful prop is the imagination of the audience, the most effective tool the skill of the actors and wherever it is performed the cry of 'Daddy! My Daddy!' is likely to provoke a tear.

Mike Kenny's version of *The Railway Children* was first staged at the National Railway Museum in York in 2008, before receiving a major production at Waterloo Station in London in 2010.



# Directors Notes



Directing a story as iconic and heartwarming as *The Railway Children* has been in equal measure, thrilling and intimidating. Perhaps it's just us, but think *The Railway Children* and you conjure a rainy afternoon on the sofa in a big, cosy sweater, with a mug of something warm in the comforting presence of Jenny Agutter and the late Bernard Cribbins. It's a story that has significance as a classic of children's literature, a milestone event in British cinema, and has shaped the childhoods, we are sure, of many of our Neston audiences.

The mild and creeping terror of doing this tender, sentimental story justice has been made much easier for us by Mike Kenny's beautiful and playful script, which sees the grown-up children remember their many adventures in Oakworth with station master Perks, the kindly Old Gentleman, refugee Mr Szcypansky and more.

Playwright Mike Kenny says that in telling this story for the stage "the most powerful prop is the imagination of the audience". As directors, we used this as our jumping off point - we decided from the offset to be prop and set light, and to have our waiting room ensemble do a lot of the work - transforming from villagers into scratching rats; from interrogators into a

dangerous landslide! We ask that you use your imaginations too as you join us on the ride.

We also decided to stage the show on a traverse set, with the railway track rostra running the length of the Civic Hall, in direct homage to the original staging of this version of the show, which Co-Director Ruth saw at the National Railway Museum in York.

Our cast have thrown themselves into rehearsals and embraced the spirit of Mike Kenny's script, and we've had a lovely time directing, ably assisted by the wonderful backstage and technical crew at Neston. We would very much like to thank everyone who has been involved in getting this show on track, particularly the Neston Players Committee for trusting us with such a classic and always being so positive about the production.

So all that's left to say is to ask you to take your seats in the carriage, dim the lights and enjoy a relaxing couple of hours with Bobby, Peter and Phyllis in Oakworth. All aboard for *The Railway Children*!

**Stuart Rathe and Ruth Stenhouse**

# 70 Years in Neston

It is 70 years since our society was founded in 1952 by Ron Kidd, a minister of the Presbyterian church who originally gave his merry troupe the name Neston Presbyterian Players. Ron was very much a fan of amateur dramatics, though some of his congregation felt that it was not a fitting pastime for a minister. Ron was not deterred by the congregation's opinions, for which generations of society members and audiences alike are very grateful.

In the 1970s, the word 'Presbyterian' was dropped from our name and shortened and Neston Civic Hall became the Players' home venue.

Since starting up in 1952, Neston Players have staged over 130 full length plays, over 20 one-act plays and even a few pantos. We have been recognised by professional body NODA (National Operatic and Drama Association) and won many awards.



We have written and performed some of our self-penned plays and collaborated with community based Hip & Harmony on two of them.

We have taken performances into the community residential homes and nursing homes which is really rewarding.

The Society is proud of its rich heritage and accomplishments and continually strives for higher standards of production.



## Get Involved

At Neston Players, we welcome absolutely everyone, whether you have a hunger to act, try your hand in a backstage role or get involved in one of the many and various other activities. We have an abundance of opportunities and there's a space for you whatever your skills or experience.

Membership of Neston Players is a hugely rewarding experience. To get in touch visit our website [www.nestonplayers.co.uk](http://www.nestonplayers.co.uk) and complete the form or email us direct: [nestonplayersmembers@gmail.com](mailto:nestonplayersmembers@gmail.com)

### Neston Players Committee 2022-2023

Chair: Martin Barker  
General Secretary: Helen Boothby  
Treasurer: Sarah McGinty  
Play Reading Manager: Gordon Wallis  
Production Team Liaison: Ally Sullivan  
Social Secretary: Cheryl Barker  
General Members: Jon Penn, Adrienne Bunker



# Cast List

**Bobbie (Roberta)** – Olivia Clark

**Peter** – Sam Bevan

**Phyllis** – Grace Stanger

**Mother** – Ticki Clark

**Father** – Stuart Rathe

**Perks** – Gordon Wallis

**Mrs Perks** – Bethany Culshaw

**Old Gentleman** – Martin Riley

**Mr Szezcpany** – Ina Schmidt

**Doctor** – Neale Cooper

**Mrs Viney** – Pam Button

**District Superintendent** – Caroline Watkinson

**Jim** – Luc Sibeon

**Cook** – Alison Connolly

**Housekeeper** – Caroline Watkinson

**Maid** – Millie Bryant

**The Perks Children**

**Elsie** – Isabelle Clarke

**Bessie** – Sophie Pugh

**Clara** – Kiahna Dane

**Freddie** – Robert Page

**Perks Baby Edward** – Willow Spraggett

**Worker 1** – Robert Page

**Worker 2** – Isabelle Clarke

**Mrs Szezcpany** – Caroline Watkinson

**Other Ensemble Roles**

Isabelle Clarke

Sophie Pugh

Kiahna Dane

Robert Page

Dolly with the Trolley – Pauline Garland



We asked all our cast about their favourite production/part they've played, their favourite children's book and their favourite pastime as a child...

# Cast Biographies

## **Bobbie (Roberta) – Olivia Clark**

My favourite role that I've played was a Wickersham brother in Seussical the musical at the Gladstone Theatre. My favourite book at a child was Paddington Bear. My favourite pastime was dance and I always went to competitions even when I was very young.



## **Peter – Sam Bevan**

My favourite production was a Twisted Carol where I played Carol Twists / Scrooge's nephew Fred. My favourite children's book was Harry Potter which has always had a special place in my heart. My favourite pastime as a child was walking the dog in the fields behind our house.



## **Phyllis – Grace Stanger**

I haven't been in many plays, but I'd say that I really enjoyed playing Lefou in my primary school's production of Beauty and the Beast. It was a while ago but I really enjoyed it. I used to love -and still do love- Little Women. My favourite character was Jo, because she wrote a lot and didn't quite follow the rules. (I don't think I'm very like Jo) I love reading, and I always have done, but when I was younger I used to like writing stories, which is something I do a lot less of now. I went to this creative writing camp and just loved it so much. I think that I just generally really liked anything to do with books.



## **Mother – Ticki Clark**

My favourite part was Playing Puck in A Midsummer Nights Dream in the grounds of a castle in Belgium. My favourite children's book is The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe.



I spent a lot of time hiding in wardrobes with the vague hope the back would fall through and I'd arrive in Narnia. My favourite pastime as a child was dancing.

## **Father – Stuart Rathe**

My favourite part was playing Benedick in Hillbark Players' Much Ado About Nothing in 2015. Particularly on the night there was a huge and very loud firework display and we had to ad lib and shout a lot to make ourselves heard. My favourite children's book is The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe by C.S Lewis. I loved the entire series and tried to get to Narnia through a wardrobe at home once when I was about 9. Sadly, it didn't work. My favourite childhood pastime was reading and drawing. I was very bookish and was rubbish at all sports.



## **Perks – Gordon Wallis**

I've been in NP too long to have just one favourite, so I've put a few more.  
 - My first play in 1988 Blithe Spirit  
 - 1991 Don't Just Lie There, Say Something with Marnie and Cliff Inns.  
 - 2010 Shadowlands playing Warnie with Michael Kennedy  
 - 2012 Cheshire Cats in a pink and black ballet dress!  
 - 2013 Eurobeat the German entry in a yellow morph suit.  
 - Recently, Enchanted April and For The Love Of It.  
 My favourite books as a child were the Biggles Series - the flying ace (undoubtedly now non-PC).  
 My favourite childhood pastimes were sport: cricket; rugby; athletics and antagonising my 3 younger brothers.



## **Mrs Perks – Bethany Culshaw**

My favourite production was Crazy for You by Ken Ludwig and George and Ira Gershwin  
 My favourite children's book is Ballet Shoes by Noel Streatfield  
 My favourite pastime as a child was Ballet Class



## **Old Gentleman – Martin Riley**

I am going to cheat this question and say my favourite series of productions have been the five Neston Players plays between 2014 and 2018 commemorating the Great War; The Accrington Pals, 'My Boy Jack', 'Henry V, 'King and Country' and 'Good Night Mr Tom'. I was on stage in all of them. My favourite Children's Book is 'The Hungry Caterpillar' which I have read to each of my grandchildren. My favourite Pastime as a child was Playing rugby.



## **Mr Szezcpany – Ina Schmidt**

My favourite production and part was when I was an extra in "The Fledermaus" J Strauss  
 My favourite children's book was The Old Man and The Sea, (Ernest Hemingway). I know that it's strange for a child but I just loved the power in this book.  
 My favourite pastime as a child was skiing after school down a hill behind our house in Germany



## **Doctor – Neale Cooper**

My favourite part was as an Ugly sister in Cinderella (not much make up required!) I had too many favourite books to pick one as reading was my favourite pastime!



## **Mrs Viney – Pam Button**

My favourite part was Karen in 'For the Love of It' she was just great fun to play.  
 My favourite book as a child was the Milly Molly Mandy stories by Joyce Lankester Brisley. I enjoyed drawing and painting as a child and once won a Blue Peter badge for designing a RNLI poster, which I no longer have as my younger sister decided to trade it in for an ice lolly when the ice cream van came around!



## **District Superintendent/ Housekeeper – Caroline Watkinson**

My favourite production was when I played Ruth in Noel Coward's Blithe Spirit  
 My favourite children's book is the Magic Faraway Tree/ Enchanted Wood  
 My favourite pastime as a child was dancing and theatre of course!



## **Jim – Luc Sibeon**

My favourite production was Oliver Twist  
 My favourite children's book is Narnia. The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe.  
 As a pastime, I love to draw.



## **Cook – Alison Connolly**

My favourite production was a Twisted Carol. I loved being a part of this, I played a auntie to the Cratchit's family, I was Bob Cratchit's sister. It was different to your normal Scrooge. What also made it special for me was I got to do this play just after the restrictions had started to lift after lock down with covid. My favourite book as a child was My Naughty Little Sister stories by Dorothy Edwards. I loved these stories so much I bought the books for my daughter when she was little. I had a few favourite pastime's, as a child I loved singing in my primary school choir. I enjoyed doing Morris dancing and entering competitions



## **Maid – Millie Bryant**

My favourite part I've ever played in a production was Ariel from the Tempest, the character uses a lot of physical theatre and that's something I really enjoy doing. I've loved reading since I was little and have read many different titles. One of my favourite childhood books was Gangsta Granny written by David Walliams, but just recently after being apart of a CBBC series called A Kind of spark written by Elle McNicoll, I decided to read the book. This book is now definitely one of my top three. As a child, I was very active and loved any outdoor activities.



## **The Perks Children /Ensemble –**

### **Isabelle Clarke**

This is my favourite, I have loved being in the Railway Children  
 My favourite children's book was Harry Potter  
 My favourite pastime as a child was horse riding



### **Sophie Pugh**

My favourite shows are the Christmas productions at primary school.  
 My favourite book is Alice in Wonderland.  
 I like rollerblading, artwork & bead jewellery.



### **Kiahna Dane**

My favourite role was playing an Oompha Lumpah in Charlie and the Chocolate factory.  
 My favourite book was Stick Man  
 My favourite pastime when I was younger was sliding down sand dunes in Prestatyn each summer.



### **Robert Page**

My favourite production was Joseph and The Technicolour Dreamcoat  
 My favourite book is Skullduggary Pleasant  
 My favourite pastime is to go hiking.



# Production Team

**Production Manager** - Sarah McGinty

**Assistant Production Manager** - Cheryl Barker

**Stage Manager** - Katie Jones

**Costume Manager** - Ally Sullivan

**Assistant Costume Manager** - Rebecca Burke-Sharples

**Hair & Make-Up Manager** - Lisa Dearnley

**Props** - Elaine Simcock, Ally Sullivan

**Set** - Martin Barker, Andy Rymer

**Lighting Engineer** - Mike Palmer

**Sound Engineer** - Andy Rymer

**Videography** - Chat Noir

**Photography** - Bill Marks, Chat Noir

**Marketing** - Sarah McGinty, Cheryl Barker

**Social Media** - Bethany Culshaw

**Website** - Helen Boothby

**Front of House Manager** - Cheryl Barker

**Box Office** - Sarah McGinty



We wrote to Jenny Agutter to tell her about our production of the Railway Children in our 70th Anniversary Year and she sent us this wonderful message in return ...



From: Jenny Agutter

27/8/22

With compliments

I'm sure the production of The Railway Children by the Neston Players will be much enjoyed. It is such a wonderful story to tell.  
All the best  
Jenny Agutter

JA Administration  
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Producing the teaser trailer for The Railway Children marks the 6th time Neston-based Chat Noir Productions has worked with Neston Players.

Our intention was to create a mini movie, rather than simply record parts of a stage rehearsal. It was filmed in a vintage style to capture a sense of the past, even going as far as using lenses dating from the 1960s. As with the trailer for 2019's The Importance of Being Earnest, the highlight of this shoot was being able to film with the cast in costume, on a suitable period location, in this case Hadlow Road Station in Willaston. We were lucky on the day, dodging both rain and members of the public. The final trailer has exactly the look and feel we'd hoped to achieve - capturing a mix of childhood fun and nostalgia.

**Dan Fox**  
Creative Director

Chat Noir Productions Ltd. is a creative film production company, based in Neston. Since 2003 it has produced creative films and animations for clients across the UK and around the world.

# Our Next Productions

## WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION

Neston Players is excited to be performing Agatha Christie's gripping story of justice, passion and betrayal. Leonard Vole is accused of murdering a widow to inherit her wealth. His solicitor refers the case to the brilliant barrister, Sir Wilfred Robarts, to lead the defence. The stakes are high with shocking witness testimony, impassioned outbursts from the dock and a young man's fight to prove his innocence.



Generally regarded as one of Christie's most accomplished plays, this wonderful thriller will keep you guessing until the very end. We invite anyone who wishes to get involved with this production, whether it be to act or support us back stage, technical crew or front of house, to come along to our presentation evening - details shown on the poster.

Or email us at [nestonplayersmembers@gmail.com](mailto:nestonplayersmembers@gmail.com) for more information.

Following the regrettable cancellation of this production in 2020 because of the COVID pandemic, Neston Players have made the decision to restage this production from 8th to 11th November 2023.

This evocative and modern play retells the historic events surrounding the political and moral conflict between King Henry VIII and the Lord Chancellor of England, Sir Thomas More. The King wishes to have his marriage to his first wife Catherine of Aragon annulled in order to marry Anne Boleyn. He expects his Chancellor to sanction and approve this. More is caught between his obligations to the Crown and his belief in the Catholic Church's teachings and he attempts to maintain his integrity and follow his conscience. This decision sets the King's allies against him and they attempt to persuade then entrap him.

Directed by Martin Riley, "A Man for All Seasons" is a powerful story based upon a taut script. It has memorable characters and despite its tragic outcome it has moments of high drama and clever humor.

## A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

BY ROBERT BOLT



AGATHA CHRISTIE

NESTON  
PLAYERS

# WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION



PRESENTATION EVENING

TUESDAY 22ND NOVEMBER 7PM AT NCYC NESTON  
AUDITIONS

FRIDAY 25TH NOVEMBER FROM 6.30 AT NCYC NESTON  
CONTACT [NESTONPLAYERSMEMBERS@GMAIL.COM](mailto:NESTONPLAYERSMEMBERS@GMAIL.COM) FOR MORE INFORMATION

THIS AMATEUR PRODUCTION OF 'WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION' IS PRESENTED BY ARRANGEMENT WITH CONCORD THEATRICALS LTD. ON BEHALF OF SAMUEL FRENCH LTD. [WWW.CONCORDTHEATRICALS.CO.UK](http://WWW.CONCORDTHEATRICALS.CO.UK)

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## THANK YOU

Firstly to the whole production team from our talented directors to photography and our wonderful costumes, it has been a great team effort. To our programme advertisers who are all local businesses and we value their support.

**Neston Civic Hall** - for your support and especially for making it possible for us to rehearse in this wonderful space.

**Shop4Neston** - a special thanks for agreeing to be our ticket outlet this year and helping to sell so many tickets.

**The Brewers** - Paul and the team always go the extra mile to make us welcome.

**Gordale** - for putting up our banner

**Chat Noir and Bill Marks** - for our wonderful video and photos.

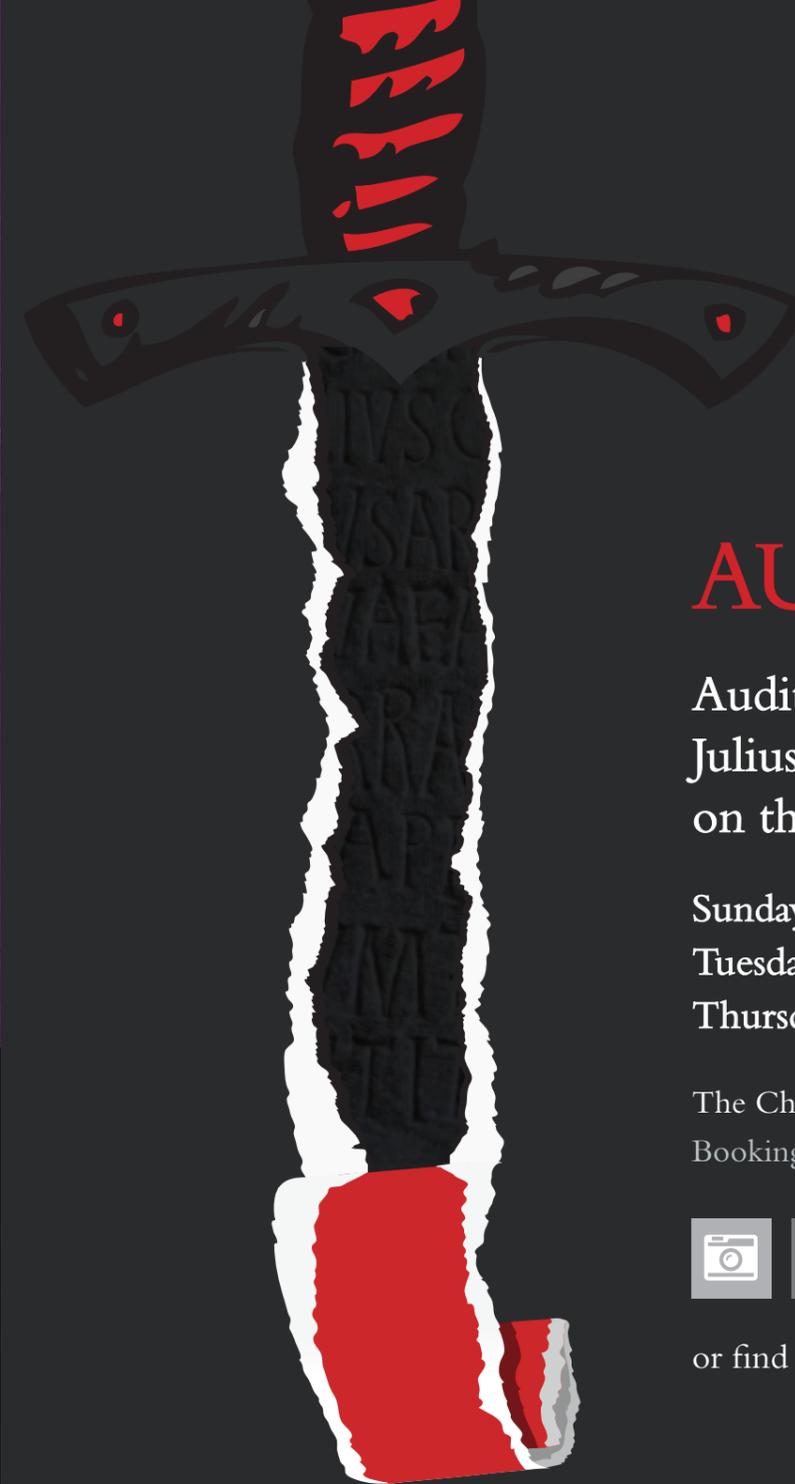
**Nigel Cooper** - for all your work on our very special train.

**Caroline Lancelyn Green** - for the generous use of our costume store and loan of some wonderful suitcases.

**Rebecca Jackson** - for the wonderful programme and artwork for our marketing.

**Helen Boothby** - for looking after our website. Take a look at [www.nestonplayers.co.uk](http://www.nestonplayers.co.uk)

A final thank you to you for coming to support us and we hope you have had a wonderful evening watching this special play and we hope to see you in May for Witness for the Prosecution



## AUDITIONS

Auditions for our production of Julius Caesar will take place on the following dates:

Sunday 27th November 2pm - 5pm

Tuesday 29th November 7.30pm - 10pm

Thursday 1st December 7.30pm - 10pm

The Church Hall, St John the Divine, Frankby  
Booking is essential



Further details from  
[www.hillbarkplayers.co.uk](http://www.hillbarkplayers.co.uk)

or find us on social media @hillbarkplayers

# JULIUS CAESAR

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