

WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION

BY AGATHA CHRISTIE



UK Be inspired by amateur theatre



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MARTIN BARKER

CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

Good evening everyone and a very warm welcome to you all.

Let me begin by saying how proud we are as a society to be announced by NODA as winners of our district in the following categories for "The Railway Children":

BEST DIRECTOR OF A DRAMA

Ruth Stenhouse & Stuart Rathe

BEST MALE YOUTH IN AN ADULT DRAMA Sam Bevan

BEST FEMALE YOUTH IN AN ADULT DRAMA

Grace Stringer

We are incredibly proud to announce that Ruth and Stuart were announced as NODA North West Winners for Best Director of a Drama. Huge congratulations to them.

What a wonderful production it was. It was fantastic to be back at the Civic Hall after a long hiatus, performing to sell out audiences and standing ovations. Well done to everyone involved.

We are delighted to be performing one of Agatha Christie's best-known plays, Witness for the Prosecution, co-directed by Sarah McGinty and Cheryl Barker who have many years experience between them acting, writing and directing.

Their commitment to this play started over a year ago and I know how hard they have worked to bring this gripping drama to our community. You will no doubt recognise some of the cast, but I am delighted that Sarah and Cheryl have also embraced giving new members, some of who have acted and others who have not, a chance to appear on the stage.



As always, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of Neston Players for their hard work and dedication. We are extremely lucky to have such talent, both on and off the stage with everyone giving many hours of their free time for your entertainment.

We always have our community at heart and I believe that not only do our shows deserve a great audience but you, our supporters and community, deserve a great production. I'm sure this will deliver both.

Thank you for your support and we look forward to seeing you in November.

MARTIN BARKER

Chair of Neston Players

Guilty or not guilty...



INTRODUCTION TO NODA

noda

Be inspired by amateur theatre

Did you know?

NODA was founded in 1899.

Membership of over 2000 amateur groups and 1000 individual members.

Members stage musicals, operas, plays, concerts and pantomimes.

Member venues range from professional theatres to village halls.

Supports the needs of youth and adult theatre, on and off stage.

NODA publishes three magazines a year **NODA Today**, read it for free on our website

Visit our website to join today

noda.org.uk

Neston Players has a proud history of attracting award winning talent and winning nominations from NODA. Within the cast of this production of *Witness for the Prosecution*, we have 4 NODA winners for our district.

GORDON WALLIS (CARTER):

Best supporting Actor playing Warnie in Shadowlands

RICHARD DODD (MAYHEW)

Best Male Supporting Actor for Neston Players 'A Few Good Men' and Best Male Lead Actor for 'A View from a Bridge' (with Bebington Dramatic Society)

SAM BEVAN (USHER/CLERK):

Best Male Youth in an Adult Drama, The Railway Children with Neston Players

JO RYMER (FOREPERSON)

3 times winner for Best Director of a Drama -Whose Life is it Anyway, Dinner, and Bette and Joan. NODA Special Achievement Award for contribution to Amateur Theatre

You don't get convicted for things you haven't done in this country, do you?

CHERYL BARKER & SARAH MCGINTY DIRECTOR'S WELCOME



We are excited to welcome you to our production of Witness for the Prosecution.

Cheryl and I have known each other for over 10 years and met through Neston Players. Between us we have experience in most areas of theatre including acting, musical theatre, directing and writing, and over the years this shared interest has helped form a firm friendship and mutual respect for one another's talents.

So despite the hard work and commitment needed, it was the fun that we have always had that encouraged Sarah to try her hand at directing and it has not disappointed. We have both loved sharing this experience and it will be a memorable debut for this co-directing team. We have an amazing cast and production team who have made all the hard work worthwhile. It has been extra special for Sarah as her sister Rebecca is making her acting

debut with Neston Players, playing the part of Janet, and she has also loved working with her close friend Ally, whose talent in the costume department speaks for itself.

We would also like to thank our husbands Martin and Tom for the support that they have both



given us and for putting up with our kitchens being taken over as courtrooms during the blocking process! We do actually enjoy time away from the society too but this usually still involves drama or costumes in some way, with theatre trips or even the odd fancy dress party!

Working together has turned into a perfect partnership, each seemingly knowing exactly what the other is thinking and working in harmony together, naturally picking up tasks best suited to our skill sets

and collaborating on every aspect of the production. We have genuinely lived, slept and breathed this play and we couldn't be more proud. We both had a strong vision for the production and spent many hundreds of hours together starting in July 2022 planning and organising how we wanted our staging, costumes, lighting and sound to be, to ensure that our audience would have a fully immersive experience.

We have leant on the talents of the cast and production team who have delivered everything we've asked for;

we could not have asked for more and can't thank them enough for their support and hard work. We have attracted many new members to our Society for this production and are proud that we cast everyone who auditioned, which is very exciting for our future.

WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION

THE STORY BEHIND THE PLAY

Set in the 1950s this is a thrilling courtroom drama of murder and passion. Leonard Vole is accused of murdering a widow to inherit her wealth.

The stakes are high with shocking witness testimony, impassioned outbursts from the dock and a young man's fight to escape the hangman's noose. The play is set in the chambers of Sir Wilfrid Robarts and the courtroom scenes take place in The Old Bailey.

Generally regarded as one of Christie's most accomplished plays, this suspenseful thriller keeps audiences guessing until the very end. Once more the Christie conjuring trick has come off. Once more we have been led down the garden path. Apart from being a clever puzzle, this is an extremely actable play.

Witness for the Prosecution was adapted by Agatha Christie from her short story Trailer Hands. First published in 1925 in the American magazine Flynn's Weekly, it was subsequently retitled for its inclusion in the 1933 collection The Hound of Death and at the time Christie herself described it as no more than a "sketch".

It was her loyal theatre producer who, in 1951, suggested expanding it for the stage and turning it into a courtroom drama.

The very first draft bears the title Hostile Witness, and under the title Christie had scribbled, "legal fun to be added!"

Christie enlisted the help of Humphrey Tiling, a barrister and keen amateur actor, to verify the legal aspects of the plot. It is said that he occasionally strayed beyond his advisory remit but when this occurred Christie sternly rejected his tampering!

The play received its West End premier in the Winter Garden Theatre in 1953 and was a huge hit. It then opened to equal acclaim on Broadway the following year.

Witness for the Prosecution would remain Christie's proudest achievement as a dramatist.

THE OLD BAILEY

The name comes from the street on which it is located

The River Fleet runs beneath it

There are 74 cells in the historic building

FAMOUS TRIALS

Oscar Wilde

Dr Crippen

William Joyce

The Yorkshire Ripper

Ronnie and Reggie Kray

AGATHA CHRISTIE

Agatha Christie is known throughout the world as the Queen of Crime.



Her books have sold over a billion copies in English with another billion in foreign languages. She is the most widely published author of all time and, in many languages, outsold only by the Bible and Shakespeare. She is the author of 66 crime novels, 150 short story collections, over 20 plays, and six novels written under the name Mary Westmacott. Her work includes *Murder on the Orient Express*, *Death on the Nile*, and the genredefining *And Then There Were None*.

Agatha Christie's first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, was written towards the end of the First World War, in which she served in the VAD. In it she created Hercule Poirot, the little Belgian detective who was destined to become the most popular detective in crime fiction since Sherlock Holmes. It was published by Bodley Head in 1920.

In 1926, after averaging a book a year, Agatha Christie wrote her first masterpiece. The Murder of Roger Ackroyd was the first of her books to be published by Collins and marked the beginning of an author-publisher relationship that lasted for 50 years and well over 70 books. 'Ackroyd' was also the first of Agatha Christie's books to be dramatized — under the title Alibi — and to have a successful run in London's West End.

By 1930, Agatha had introduced a new character to act as detective. When she created Miss Marple, Agatha did not expect her to become Poirot's rival, but with The Murder at the Vicarage, Miss Marple's first full length outing, it appeared she had produced another popular and enduring character.

The Mousetrap, her most successful play of all, opened in 1952 and is the longest-running play in history.

Agatha Christie was made a dame in 1971. She died in 1976.

Agatha Christie Limited (ACL) has been managing the literary and media rights to Agatha Christie's works around the world since 1955, working with the best talents in film, television, publishing, stage and on digital platforms to ensure that Christie's work continues to reach new audiences in innovative ways and to the highest standard. The company is managed by Christie's great grandson James Prichard. Visit www.agathachristie. com for more information.



By 1954 Witness was one of three Christie plays running simultaneously in the West End, a feat which she was the first female playwright to achieve.

The Daily Telegraph



















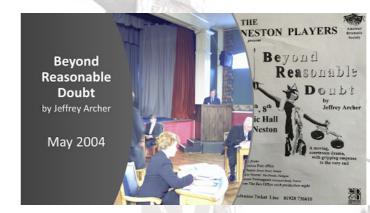


GET INVOLVED

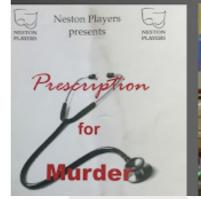
At Neston Players, we welcome absolutely everyone, whether you have a hunger to act, try your hand in a backstage role or get involved in one of the many and various other activities. We have an abundance of opportunities and there's a space for you whatever your skills or experience.

Membership of Neston Players is a hugely rewarding experience. To get in touch visit our website www.nestonplayers.co.uk and complete the form or email us direct: members@nestonplayers.co.uk

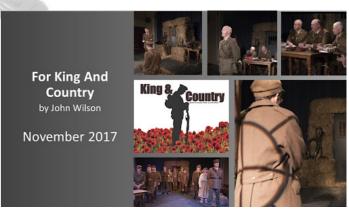
PREVIOUS NESTON PLAYERS COURTROOM DRAMAS











I thought I knew all about blondes, but a strawberry blonde ...

CAST

BY ORDER OF APPEARANCE

GRETA CARTER MR MAYHEW LEONARD VOLE SIR WILFRID ROBARTS OC INSPECTOR HEARNE POLICEMAN ROMAINE VOLE CLERK OF THE COURT MR JUSTICE WAINWRIGHT MR MEYERS QC JURY

PUBLIC GALLERY

COURT STENOGRAPHER WARDER DR WYATT JANET MACKENZIE ELIZABETH CLEGG GIRL

ISABELLE CLARKE **GORDON WALLIS** RICHARD DODD GAVIN PERSAND JAMES RICHARDS DAVID NOBLE SIMON DEERE LOUISE ELLINSON SAM BEVAN MARTIN RILEY STUART HARPER JOANNE RYMER MARIA EDEN **ELAINE SIMCOCK** ALISON CONNOLLY PAM BUTTON

EMMA GRIFFITHS

ISABELLE CLARKE

KITTY CLEMENTS

REBECCA BURKE-SHARPLES

NEALE COOPER

HELEN NEAL

WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION

ACT ONE THE CHAMBERS OF SIR WILFRID ROBARTS THE OLD BAILEY

THERE WILL BE AN INTERVAL OF 20 MINS

ACT TWO THE OLD BAILEY THE CHAMBER OF SIR WILFRID ROBARTS LONDON DOCKSIDE THE OLD BAILEY

PRODUCTION TEAM

PRODUCTION MANAGERS

DIRECTORS

STAGE MANAGER COSTUMES LIGHTING SOUNDS SET BUILD PROPS (SOURCING) MAKE-UP AND HAIR MARKETING

PROGRAMME COORDINATOR TICKET SALES COORDINATOR SARAH MCGINTY FRONT OF HOUSE COORDINATOR PROGRAMME DESIGN

CHERYL BARKER SARAH MCGINTY CHERYL BARKER SARAH MCGINTY SARAH MCGINTY **ALLY SULLIVAN** MIKE PALMER ANDREW RYMER MARTIN BARKER REBECCA BURKE-SHARPLES LISA DEARNLEY CHERYL BARKER SARAH MCGINTY CAROLINE WATKINSON SARAH MCGINTY CHERYL BARKER

REBECCA JACKSON

CAST BIOGRAPHIES



(Plymouth, 1996)

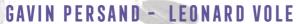


JAMES RICHARDS
SIR WILFRID ROBARTS QC

James played Sammy Twist (the ghost of Jacob Marley) in A Twisted Carol in December 2021, his first role with the Neston Players. Before that, he sang and danced in drag cabaret as Belladonna, firstly at Madame Jojos in London (2000-2005), and at Le Tango in Paris 2009-2013. James started his theatrical journey as Joseph in Joseph and His Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat (Truro, Cornwall 1991), followed by Oliver in Oliver Twist (Redruth, Cornwall 1993). He has also held small parts and chorus roles in Sweeney Todd (Plymouth 1995), Guys and Dolls and Orpheus in the Underworld (Plymouth, 1997).

STUART HARPER MR MYERS O.C.

This is Stuart's second production with Neston Players, having his first ever performance in the 2021 pantomime 'The Frog and The Fungus'. Outside of amateur dramatics Stuart works as a radio Astronomer for the University of Manchester and hopes to bring his cold, calculating skills to bear as Mr Myers Q.C. for the prosecution.





Gavin trained at the London Studio Centre and upon graduating has worked extensively in theatre, film and television as both a dancer and actor. Gavin performed for Matthew Bourne's New Adventures dance company in numerous national and international tours of Swan Lake, Edward Scissorhands, Nutcracker and Cinderella playing theatres such as Sydney Opera House, Sadler's Wells, Chatalet du Paris, Moscow Arts Centre, Ahmanson in LA and Bunkamora in Tokyo. Gavin performed Samson et Dalila, Pinocchio, Red Balloon and Brittons Canticles at the Royal Opera House and Faust for ENO at the London Coliseum.

For film and TV Gavin played the lead role of Elegabelus in a series entitled Life and Death in Rome for Sky I, performed in a feature film entitled The Mumbo Jumbo, appeared on grand final of Dancing with the Stars in Australia and danced the Cygnet Dance from Swan Lake on the Paul O'Grady show.

Gavin has also choreographed for the Chinese education system in various Chinese provinces. Gavin is delighted to be part of the Neston Players and wishes all involved the very best!



LOUISE ELLINSON ROMAINE VOLE

Louise won her first major role in a stage production at the tender age of eight. It was a school Christmas play, and she played the rather un-Christmassy part of a bad-tempered genie, but it was enough to trigger a lifelong love of treading the boards. Participation in many youth theatre productions followed, and she subsequently joined the adult company of the Talisman Theatre in her hometown of Kenilworth where she performed in Major Barbara and Dark of the Moon, among others. She went on to study drama in Stratford-upon-Avon, with parts in The

Rivals, Marat/Sade, and Oedipus, and made the most of the reduced-price student tickets for RSC productions by seeing as many plays as possible during her two years there. In recent years Louise's dramatic pursuits have largely been in the musical world, as she is also a classically-trained soprano and enjoys singing everything from Puccini to Sondheim. She has performed lead roles in Chester Operatic Society's recent productions of The Yeoman of the Guard (Elsie Maynard), Ruddigore (Rose Maybud), and The Pirates of Penzance (Mabel). When not performing herself, she spends her time conducting others, either in her role as Choral Director at the University of Liverpool or with one of her other choirs. Outside of work Louise can usually be found making cakes, walking her daft golden retriever, or trying to convince her children that putting toys away after playing with them is more fulfilling than leaving them all over the floor.



RICHARD DODD Mayhew

Richard joined Neston Players in 2012 for their highly successful production of 'A Few Good Men', for which he received a NODA award of 'Best Supporting Actor' for the district. Other productions with Neston include the black comedy 'Dinner', 'Henry V', 'King & Country' and 'The Importance of Being Earnest' Other roles in other societies include Fagin in 'Oliver Twist' with St Paul's Operatic, Hortensio in 'Taming of the Shrew' with Hillbark Players. With Bebington Dramatic Society Benjamin Braddock in 'The Graduate' and more recently as Eddie Carbone in 'A View from the Bridge' for which he won 'Best Leading Male in a Drama.

Richard had waited 25 years to play this role and is delighted at this recognition.



MARTIN RILEY
MR JUSTICE WAINWRIGHT

Martin has been acting with various Wirral companies since 2005. He has also taken part in the Chester Mystery Plays in 2008 and appeared with Hillbark Players in various roles including Macduff in The Scottish Play in 2009 and Theseus Duke of Athens in A Midsummer Night's Dream in 2018.

He has appeared in several plays for Neston Players and was heavily involved both in acting and directing in their WWI Centennial Play Cycle between 2014 and 2018, including roles as Fluellen and the Bishop of Ely (for which he received a

NODA nomination as Best Supporting Actor) in the production of Henry V and as Captain O'Sullivan whilst directing 'King and Country' in 2017. In 2018 he received a NODA nomination for Best Director (and made a brief stage appearance in a non-speaking role) in 'Goodnight Mr Tom'. Most recently he appeared as The Old Gentleman in Neston's highly acclaimed The Railway Children (2022).

CAST BIOGRAPHIES



REBECCA BURKE-SHARPLES
JANET MCKENZIE

This is Rebecca's first acting role with Neston Players. She is no stranger to 'am dram' having performed with Dee & Alyn and Heswall Operatic Society. Rebecca has sung for her supper many times coming from a family of after dinner performers and singers. She is thrilled to be directed by Cheryl and her little sister, Sarah.



DAVID NOBLE
CHIEF INSPECTOR HEARNE

This is David's first production with the Neston players. After his debut role as the artful dodger in his primary school play of "Oliver", he couldn't get enough of the stage. He kept up acting through high school and university, doing productions such as "Rent", "Footloose" and "Our House". He's very much looking forwards to inspecting his first murder.



GORDON WALLIS MR CARTER

Gordon has been a member of Neston Players for over 35 years, having joined in 1987 to play Charles in Blythe Spirit. His many roles include: 2010: Shadowlands (Major Warner Lewis); 2013: Eurobeat (a German yellow blob); 2015: Enchanted April (Mellersh); 2016: The Odd Couple (Jesus – not the real one!); 2017: For the love of it (Dave). Recently he's played a 5-year-old astronaut, Bob Cratchitt, a hairy hippy called Weed and the likeable Albert Perks the Porter in The Railway Children.



ISABELLE CLARKE GRETA/ DR. WYATT

Izzy is really excited to be performing the role of Greta. She was recently a part of the ensemble in Neston Players' highly successful production of The Railway Children. Having achieved the highest grade possible in GCSE Drama, she has most recently performed as Helena in Shakespeare's 'All's Well That Ends Well' as part of her A Level Theatre Studies at the local high school. When not acting or studying, Izzy will be found with her equine friends. Izzy hopes to pursue a career in acting and is really enthusiastic about playing the part of Greta and being part of the stage management team too.



HELEN NEAL MRS CLEGG

Newcastle-born Helen joined Neston Players in 2022. Her love of books and murder mysteries inspired her to take the next step of being on stage. She is really excited to play the Forensic Assistant, Clegg, and give evidence in *Witness for the Prosecution*.



SAM BEVAN COURT CLERK

Sam has been a part of Neston Players for just over a year and is very excited to be taking part in this production. Sam has been in two productions for Neston Players; 2021 'A Twisted Carol' when he played Carol's joyous nephew Fred and in 2022 as Peter in 'The Railway Children', for which he won a NODA award for 'Best Male Youth in an Adult Drama' for our district. Sam is really looking forward to being part of many future productions by Neston Players.



EMMA MADDOCKS Stenographer

Emma has been a member of Neston Players since 2019. She has appeared in 'Flint Street Nativity', 'The Frog and The Fungus' and lead the cast in 'The Changing Rooms' which was performed for the 2020 Cheshire Drama Festival. She is really excited to be part of this iconic play.



NEALE COOPER WARDEN

After being dragged into helping backstage at a local pantomime, Neale emerged having been bitten by the acme acting bug – it must have been the outside latrines – and has been searching for a cure ever since. Following his move to the Wirral, he joined Neston Players and after appearing in several recent productions, he is still seeking a cure but enjoying being surrounded by a great wealth of talent.



SIMON DEERE Policeman

Simon is a long-standing member of Neston Players with a number of acting and backstage roles, starting with "Shadowlands" and including "Comfort & Joy", "Eurobeat", "Lord Arthur Saviles Crime" (as Director), "Accrington Pals", "My boy Jack", "Henry V", "King & Country", "Goodnight Mr Tom" and others. Looking forward to the next production, as Stage manager of (deferred from 2019 because of Covid) "A Man for all Seasons".



PAM BUTTON - PUBLIC GALLERY

Pam has been a member of Neston Players since 2017, when she played the role of Karen in 'For the Love of it'. Pam's last role with the society was in 2022 as Mrs Viney in 'The Railway Children'. Pam loves to sing and is a member of Hip & Harmony Community Choir and The 64 N'Ukes. She is looking forward to sitting in the gallery in this production and watching the drama unfold.



ALISON CONNOLLY - PUBLIC GALLERY

Alison has been a member of Neston Players for 2 years now and she loves it! She has been in 'A Twisted Carol' and 'The Railway Children'. She has enjoyed all of them and hopes to do a lot more. Alison is also a member of Hip & Harmony Community Choir and it was while in this choir she also made her stage debut in Neston Players 'For The Love if It' as an auditionee.



JOANNE RYMER - FOREPERSON OF THE JURY / 1ST JUROR

Jo has been involved in this insane hobby of amateur dramatics with Neston Players for twenty years. She became hooked after eavesdropping on a conversation in the pub. She says she should have known better! Her last role treading the boards was in the self-penned play by Neston Players in celebration of the 100 years anniversary of Neston Ladies Society called 'A Walk-through Time'. Realising she was not a Judi Dench, Jo decided to try directing, which she loved and she has been NODA nominated four times for Best Director.



ELAINE SIMCOCK - JUROR

Elaine loves all things theatre and after friends persuaded her to join Neston Players, she offered to help out backstage. Elaine has enjoyed all of the roles she has undertaken and learned to turn her hand too, from acting, props and assisting with stage management. She also is a fantastic cook and caters for the society at charity events and after-show parties. This is Elaine's second time on stage - something she never expected!



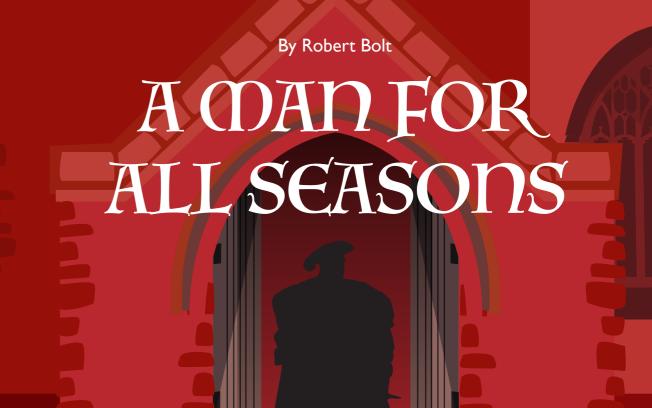
MARIA EDEN - JUROR

Maria has been watching amateur dramatic performances for forty years and recently decided to take the plunge and be part of the company rather than the audience. Having recently moved to Willaston, she joined Neston Players and Witness For The Prosecution is her first appearance in an amateur dramatic play.



KITTY CLEMENTS - GIRL

Kitty is very excited to be a part of Neston Player's production of Witness for the prosecution. In the past, she has been part of school plays, such as Lord of the Flies and performances of Grimm's tales. Right now, she is also working towards her GCSEs. Kitty would like to give an extra special thanks to both the Neston Players for the wonderful opportunity and to her parents, for driving her to rehearsals!



Directed by Martin Riley

Wednesday 8 - Saturday 11 November 2023

NESTON CIVIC HALL

Tickets on sale soon at www.nestonplayers.co.uk or Shop 4 Neston



This amateur production of 'A Man for All Seasons' is presented by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH LTD, a Concorde Theatricals Company

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.

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

Scirard & Caroline Lancelyn Green - for the generous use of our costume store and loan of some lovely furniture.

Thanks also to Neston Methodist Church for our

rehearsal space and to Neston Civic Hall, Neston Library, Neston Town Council.

Thank you to Louise Ellinson for media videos and Alex Cracknell and Abigail Bennett for loan of wigs.

Thank you to Gordale and The Brewers for allowing us to display our advertising banners.

Thank you to Becca at Love Your Nation for her support and guidance and patience in the programme creation.

COMMITTEE

2022-2023

Chair: Martin Barker
General Secretary:
Rebecca Burke-Sharples

Treasurer: Sarah McGinty

Play Reading Manager: Gordon Wallis Production Team Liaison: Ally Sullivan

Social Secretary: Cheryl Barker

Co Opted Members:

Caroline Watkinson, Emma Maddocks



SHOP 4 NESTON

The ONLY community shop in Neston!

All profits raised are spent in our community.

6 Liverpool Road Neston

Shop-Donate-Volunteer-Help local good causes





LISA DEARNLEY

Lisa has worked on many productions as our Hair and Make-up Manager and is a joy to work with. She has a wonderful talent but above all she is always smiling, positive and determined.

Lisa was looking forward to celebrating five years cancer free in December 2022 and was planning a fundraising journey of her own, but it wasn't to be.

Lisa's partner Gavin is also a member of Neston Players and plays Leonard Vole in our production tonight. To support Lisa and her family through this difficult time, we have been involved in fundraising, to enable them to secure practical aid and some financial assistance.



To learn more about her story & donate, please go to her Go Fund Me page:

https://gofund.me/aabccd1c

James Cubbin & Sons

We are delighted to support the Neston Players as they bring
Witness for the Prosecution to the stage!



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Caring in Wirral



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