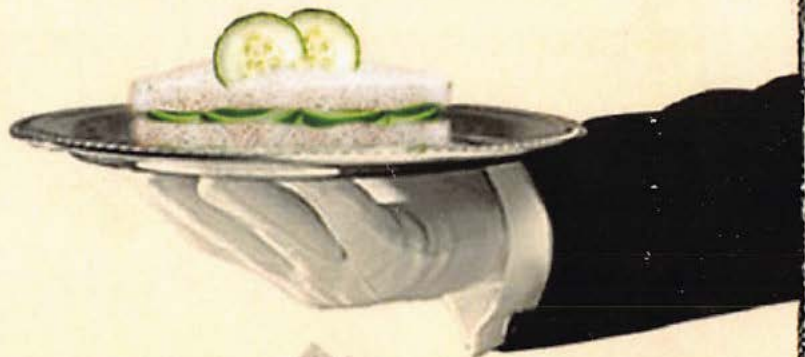


OSCAR WILDE'S  
IMPROBABLE COMEDY  
THE  
IMPORTANCE  
OF BEING  
EARNEST



Open Air Production in the grounds of  
Wimborne's historic Deans Court

**Thurs 30th June - Sat 2nd July**

7.30pm start; grounds open 6.30pm for picnics

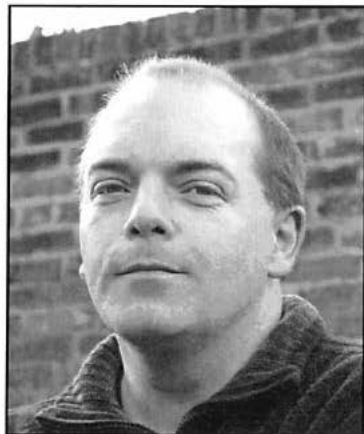
Opening night gala performance in aid of **Julia's House**  
The Dorset Children's Hospice

A Wimborne Drama Production

# WELCOME to Deans Court

Good evening and welcome to the magnificent setting of Deans Court, home to Wimborne Drama for the week as we perform Oscar Wilde's most famous comedy *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

"Earnest" seemed a natural choice to me as we decided to head outdoors for our inaugural open-air performance here. The play is light, witty and the "main" act is supposed to be set in a summer garden – not always the easiest thing to achieve on stage. Like many other people it is a play I studied at school and although some references now seem archaic and reminiscent of an age long gone, the play's essential zeal and brio shine through, keeping it remarkably fresh. There are very good reasons why it is Wilde's most successful and oft performed play. Some dialogue could be described as too famous!



So many people have been instrumental in helping to get the show literally on the road. It seems many months ago now since we first came to Deans Court to discuss the possibility of performing here. With fires crackling and rain drizzling down the windows, we peered out onto Deans Court's back lawn in order to imagine the possibilities. It hardly seemed possible then – but here we are!

Since the initial planning stages Sir William Hanham and the estate's events manager Jonathan Cornish have been charming, friendly, helpful and as anxious as us to make the play a success. Indeed, Sir William was very keen on our choice of play from the start. I would like to thank them both and all the staff at Deans Court for their courteous, professional help over the past few months. As some of you may know, Sir Michael Hanham was our president for many years and he and Lady Jane always made a real effort to attend our performances. It is great to be continuing our association with the estate.

I would like to thank my magnificent cast for coping so well with the wordy excesses of Wilde's dialogue. It has been great fun rehearsing as usual. I feel we have gathered together a very strong team and I have tried, as usual, to blend older hands with new blood if you'll excuse my mixed metaphor. I have had sterling support from my backstage team as well and I thank them all – in particular Chrissie Neal, credited elsewhere as 'production manager' but in reality so much more. From publicising the show on local radio to negotiating prices on portable loos – it's been what you might call a wide-ranging remit!

Lastly I thank you, our brave audience. As I write it is a beautiful spring morning – I hope the weather is at least reasonable as you read this! The setting is just so beautiful; I only hope my visions of picnics on a balmy summer's evening have come true. As Canon Chasuble would have it, "...our weather is so changeable". We really appreciate your support and I hope you enjoy the show.

**Paul Dodman**

**Director, June 2011**

## BEING *Wilde*

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was born in Dublin on 16th October 1854. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin and Magdalen College, Oxford where he developed a flamboyant style of dress, contempt for conventional values and a belief in aestheticism - a movement that embraced the principle of art for the sake of beauty and beauty alone.

Despite his affectation as a dilettante, Wilde was a brilliant scholar and won the Newdigate Prize for poetry. But he had no clear idea how a genius was to earn a living, though he had resolved that "somehow or other I'll be famous, and if not famous, I'll be notorious".

In 1871 he was invited to lecture in America as the personification of the limp, lily-clutching aesthete Reginald Bunthorne in Gilbert and Sullivan's opera *Patience*. Dressed in velvet and fur, Byronic shirts, and knee



breeches and stockings, he took America by storm.

In 1884 he married Constance Lloyd. The couple had two sons Cyril and Vyvyan. Though Wilde remained fond of Constance, their marital relations ceased within a few

years.

During the late 1880s, Wilde wrote reviews, edited *The Lady's World*, and published a volume of poetry and one of children's stories. In 1890, his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the tale of a man who retains his youthful looks as his painted image fades, appeared and was attacked as scandalous and immoral.

Despairing of English morality masquerading as criticism, Wilde left for Paris, where he wrote another scandalous play that was never performed in England in his lifetime, *Salomé*, about the woman who danced before

King Herod carrying the severed head of John the Baptist.

In 1892, whilst in London supervising rehearsals of his first play for the London stage, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, he met and began a relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas, known as Bosie.

By now Wilde's literary star was rising. Over the next few years, he wrote *A Woman of No Importance*, *An Ideal Husband*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

*The Importance of Being Earnest* opened on 14th February 1895 at the St. James's Theatre in London. Part satire, part comedy of manners and part intellectual farce, the play was a triumph.

Wilde was finally the darling of London society, a position he had striven for years to attain. But his pleasure was short-lived.

Two weeks after the opening night of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Lord Alfred's father, the Marquess of Queensberry, publicly accused Wilde of "posing as a sodomite" [sic]. Egged on by Bosie, who detested his father, Wilde sued for libel and lost, the defence highlighting Wilde's "immoral works" and his association with a string of young working class boys. Wilde was arrested and tried for gross indecency. Once again his writing and its power to corrupt were on trial too. Wilde mounted a magnificent defence of the "love that dare not speak its name" at which the public gallery burst into applause, but he was found guilty and received two years' hard labour.

Following his release from prison, his health and spirit broken, he sought exile in France, where he lived out the last two years of his life in poverty and obscurity under an assumed name. There he wrote his last work, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, a long poem commemorating the harsh rhythms of prison life. He died in Paris on 30th November 1900.

For decades after Wilde's death, critics and audiences regarded *The Importance of Being Earnest* as a delightful but utterly frivolous and superficial comedy. But in more recent years we have been able to look below the surface.

There we find a serious message about self-righteous moralism and hypocrisy, the very aspects of Victorian society that helped to bring about Wilde's downfall; and with references to "confirmed and secret Bunburyists" leading hidden lives, a probable homosexual subtext.

## ABOUT *Deans Court*

Deans Court has been owned by the Hanham family since 1548. The house was originally the Deanery to the Minster and dates from the reign of Edward the Confessor (1327-1377), when the first Dean was appointed. At the dissolution of the chantries, the Manor of Wimborne Deanery was granted to John Hanham, MP for Poole, whose descendants have lived here ever since.

The house lies within romantic ancient gardens, containing a Saxon fishpond fed by a chalk trout stream, an apiary, orchard, herb garden, mature specimen trees and an old kitchen garden with a 'crinkle-crinkle' serpentine wall.



### **Bee Keeping Courses**

2nd, 3rd & 4th  
August

Introduction to bee keeping

Planning your hive

Maintaining your hive

With seasonal lunch from our kitchen garden

[www.deanscourt.org](http://www.deanscourt.org)

or 01202 880515

## ABOUT *Julia's House*

Julia's House is Dorset's only hospice dedicated to children with life-limiting conditions. The majority of the children in its care are unlikely to live beyond the age of 18.

Complementing the work of the Julia's House Community Team, which consists of 90 nurses and carers who travel the county, the children's hospice provides life-changing support for families both in their own homes and in the hospice itself. In addition, Julia's House runs social events for the children's parents, brothers and sisters, to relieve the pressure of their daily lives.

Receiving only approximately eight per cent of its funding from the Government, Julia's House relies on the generosity of the Dorset community, corporate partners and charitable foundations to help raise the remainder of its required income. In 2011, it is estimated that it will cost nearly £2.8m to continue to provide these vital services.

Wimborne Drama is delighted to be supporting the fantastic work of Julia's House and a donation will be made at the gala performance of *The Importance of Being Earnest* on Thursday night. For more information about Julia's House, telephone 01202 607400 or visit [www.juliashouse.org](http://www.juliashouse.org)

**Julia's House**  
The Dorset Children's Hospice



# THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

*by Oscar Wilde*

## CAST

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Lane, <i>manservant</i>	PAUL HEWITT
Mr Algernon Moncrieff	ROB CORDING
Mr John Worthing, J.P.	MARK EVERITT
Lady Bracknell	VAL MANTLE
Hon. Miss Gwendolen Fairfax	TRACEY NICHOLLS
Miss Cecily Cardew	JENN SINGLETON
Merriman, <i>butler</i>	DAVID PILE
Rev. Canon Frederick Chasuble	MICHAEL SMITH
Miss Prism, <i>governess</i>	JAN STEVENSON

*with*

JACKSON ELLEN JUDY GARRETT CAROLYN HEWITT  
VERENA SMITH *and* STEVE SYMONDS

The action of the play takes place in Mr Algernon Moncrieff's London flat and subsequently in the garden of the Manor House belonging to Mr John Worthing. There will be one interval of approximately 20 minutes

Produced by Wimborne Drama (Open Air Productions)  
at Deans Court, Wimborne 30th June—2nd July 2011

## CREATIVE *Team*

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Director	PAUL DODMAN
Set Designer	JACKSON ELLEN
Costume Designer	CAROLYN HEWITT
Set Construction	MARK ELLEN
Sound	COLIN PILE
Continuity	BARRY BAYNTON
Properties	JUDY GARRETT
ASM	JILL RICHMOND
Hair & Make-up	CAROLYN CRUTE
Production Manager	CHRISSIE NEAL
Assistant Production Manager	RICHARD NEAL

## PRODUCTION *Credits*

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We gratefully acknowledge loans and assistance from the following:

Brian Dryden of Wimborne	Hierarchy Costumes
Daisy Graphic	P&P Productions
Deans Court Estate	Pete Alcock's Presentation Services
Doubles	Royal British Legion Wimborne
Eclectia Costumes	Tivoli Theatre
Forest FM	Tom Lewis (poster design)
Gabude	Wimborne Garden Centre
Gullivers Bookshop	Wimborne Tourist Information Centre

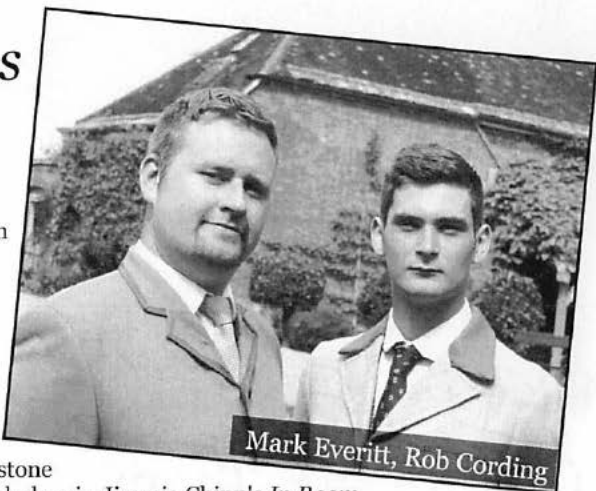
# CAST Profiles

## ROB CORDING

(*Algernon Moncrieff*)

Born in Poole, and now living in Wimborne, Rob works at a hotel in Bournemouth. He studied for a National Diploma in Performing Arts at Bournemouth & Poole College. His last role was as Jan Warwick in Agatha Christie's *The Unexpected Guest* for Wimborne Drama at the Tivoli Theatre. This also happened to be his favourite role with the company. For Broadstone

Players Rob played Harry Wolstenholme in Jimmie Chinn's *In Room Five Hundred and Four* for which he won the Leslie Banks Trophy for Best Male Performance at the Dorset Drama League Festival in 2009.



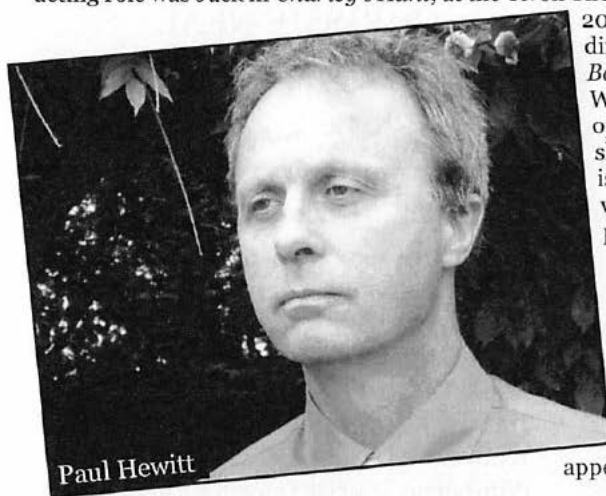
## MARK EVERITT (*Jack Worthing*)

Mark was born in Boscombe and has lived in the area all his life. He is a teaching assistant. A musical theatre graduate, he recently played King Herod in *Jesus Christ Superstar* at the Lighthouse Poole for P&P Productions. His favourite roles include Ralph Nickleby in *Nicholas Nickleby* at Poole College (2005); Darryl Van Horne, *The Witches Of Eastwick The Musical*, Bournemouth University (2007); Judge Turpin in *Sweeney Todd The Musical*, Bournemouth University (2007); and Melvin P Thorpe, *Best Little Whorehouse In Texas*, Batt Productions, Pier Theatre (2008).

## PAUL HEWITT (*Lane*)

Paul was born in St. Albans and moved to Dorset in 1979. He is an accountant. His last acting role was Jack in *Charley's Aunt*, at the Tivoli Theatre, for Wimborne Drama in

2004. More recently Paul has directed *Flesh and Blood* (2005) and *Badger's Green* (2008), both for Wimborne Drama, and has also operated the sound on a number of shows. His favourite role of all time is Robert Timmins in *Lark Rise* which Wimborne Drama performed in 1989.



## VAL MANTLE

(*Lady Bracknell*)

Val was born in Enfield, North London and moved to Dorset in 1955. Now retired, she worked as an accounts clerk. Her last appearance was in *Out of Focus* for

Broadstone Players in February 2011. Her favourite roles include Dotty Ottley in *Noises Off*, Broadstone Players (1998); Muriel in *Habeus Corpus*, Wimborne Drama (2000); in the chorus of *Murder in the Cathedral*, Wimborne Drama, in Wimborne Minster (2005); in *Barefoot in the Park*, Broadstone Players (2008).



### TRACEY NICHOLLS (*Gwendolen*)

Tracey was born in Hammersmith, London and moved to Dorset when she was three. She is a parish administrator. Her last role was Laura Warwick in the Wimborne Drama production of Agatha Christie's *Unexpected Guest* in 2010. Her favourite role was Shelby in Wimborne Drama's production of *Steel Magnolias* in 2009. As a lover of Shakespeare Tracey also really enjoyed playing Hermia in an open air production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for Swan Theatre in 2003.

### DAVID PILE (*Merriman*)

David was born in Dorset and has been involved in amateur theatre for 60 years, in musicals, pantomime and drama. A retired ambulance officer, David's last performance was in *Hound of the Baskervilles* for Wimborne Drama in 2010 when he played several characters. The roles that gave most satisfaction for David were Old William in *Flesh and Blood* for Wimborne Drama (2005) or Feste in *Twelfth Night* for Swan Theatre (2000). David has also

directed for Wimborne Drama *Dial M for Murder* (2007), *Witness for the Prosecution* (2009) and *The Unexpected Guest* (2010). At the Tivoli Theatre in October he will direct another Agatha Christie thriller, *And Then There Were None*.

### JENN SINGLETON (*Cecily*)

Jenn was born in Dunfermline, Scotland and moved to Dorset in 1995. She is a primary school teacher. She studied at Bangor University and also trained in Drama and Theatre Arts in London for a year. Her last role was in *Sony If I Knew What To*, written and directed by Christopher Stokes, Bangor. Favourite roles include: various characters in a sketch show brought to Edinburgh Festival with Bangor University Drama Society (2007); Lady Macduff in *Macbeth*, with Bangor University Drama Society, Rostra







Jan Stevenson, Michael Smith

(2006); Mary MacGregor in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, with Impact Theatre and Queen Elizabeth's School (2001).

## MICHAEL SMITH

(*Canon Chasuble*)

Michael is originally from Oxford, but retired to Dorset from Kingston-upon-Thames in 2007. He trained at The Webber-Douglas Drama Academy in the 1950s and worked professionally as an actor, director and theatre producer. Among his many

memories are sweeping up after the ponies in

*Cinderella* at Watford rep (and buying two bottles of Guinness for Cinders to drink in the interval!) and directing the inmates of the Asylum at Charenton in a production of *The Marat/Sade*. Eventually Michael settled on a career as a theatre accountant giving tax and financial advice to actors and film and theatre companies. He joined Wimborne Drama in 2008 and has appeared in *Great Expectations*, *Witness for the Prosecution* and *The Unexpected Guest*. His favourite roles are *King Lear* for the Richmond Shakespeare Society and the father in John Mortimer's, *A Voyage Round My Father*.

## JAN STEVENSON (*Miss Prism*)

Jan was born in Reading, but only stayed there for two weeks, having been found out at a very early age! She moved to Wimborne in 1979 and joined Wimborne Drama the same year. Her first role was a mumbling one, some may say, nothing has changed. She has enjoyed many roles over the years. Some of her favourites have been in *Blithe Spirit*, *The Hollow*, *A Voyage Round My Father*, *Far From The Madding Crowd*, *Lark Rise To Candleford*, *Bedroom Farce* and many more. Jan is delighted to be playing Miss Prism and loves Oscar Wilde's cynically observant yet wonderfully witty writing.

## PAUL DODMAN (*Director*)

Paul was born in Chipping Norton in Oxfordshire and is a school teacher. He has directed for Wimborne Drama on several previous occasions, most recently an adaptation of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* in 2008 and Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* in 2005. Previous credits include directing *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes and Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. He is now very



Tracey Nicholls, Mark Everitt

much looking forward to seeing *The Importance of Being Earnest* come alive in this beautiful setting. Paul has appeared on stage several times for the group, his favourite recent role being Leonard Vole in Agatha Christie's *Witness for the Prosecution*. "Playing the bad guy who everyone thinks is the good guy throughout the play was just great fun and I'd have to say one of my all time favourites!"

#### JACKSON ELLEN (*Set Designer*)

Born in Wallasey near Liverpool, Jackson worked as a scene shifter at Liverpool Empire but got stuck behind a pillar during the balcony scene of *Romeo and Juliet* and was dismissed shortly afterwards. She moved to Knowsley Theatre in Education Team in 1978 as Musical Director, and also played Rita in *Billy Liar*, a dame in two pantomimes ("we were short of men") and Mrs Frazer in *Chorus Line*. Moving to London she worked as a BBC music researcher. In 2000 Jackson relocated to Dorset and is now a psychotherapist. She has designed and built a number of sets for Wimborne Drama productions, her favourites being *Charlie's Aunt* and *Journey's End*.

#### CAROLYN HEWITT (*Costume Designer*)

Dorset born and bred, Carolyn has been with Wimborne Drama since 1977 when, whilst playing the part of Ado Annie in a school production of *Oklahoma*, she was "spotted" and offered a part in *The Amorous Prawn*. Since then she has performed in a large variety of parts with the group and then took a break to do more costume and backstage work. Her last acting role was in *Steel Magnolias* in 2009. Carolyn is a company director and careers adviser.

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### President of Wimborne Drama

Anthony Oliver MBE

### Patrons of Wimborne Drama

Frances Alton	Dorothy Dodman	Peter Neal
Lynda Bellingham (H)	George Dodman	Tina Nicholls
Roger Billings	Harry Foster	Anthony Oliver
Beverley Blehs	Roy Hudd (H)	Christine Oliver
Lottie Brown	Valerie Jolliffe	Anthony Pawley
Edward Childe	Roy Joseph (H)	Linda Pawley
Robin Cook (H)	Diann March	Patricia Pile
Joyce Curry	Michael Medwin (H)	Pamela Wood
Margaret Denslow	Sheila Morrell	<i>H signifies honorary</i>

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Forthcoming Wimborne Drama Productions at the Tivoli Theatre:

*And Then There Were None* by Agatha Christie, 13th-15th October 2011

*Enchanted April* by Matthew Barber, 1st-3rd March 2012

For information about becoming a Patron and for more news of our future productions visit

[www.WimborneDrama.co.uk](http://www.WimborneDrama.co.uk)

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Agatha Christie's  
**AND  
THEN  
THERE  
WERE**

**NONE**

TEN STRANGERS TRAPPED  
ON A REMOTE ISLAND  
ONE BY ONE THEY START TO DIE  
"Christie's masterpiece of suspense"  
*Spectator*

Thursday 13th Friday 14th  
Saturday 15th October 2011

Evening performances at 7.30pm - Tickets £10  
Saturday matinee at 2.30pm - Tickets £8

**TIVOLI THEATRE WIMBORNE**

BOX OFFICE **01202 885566**

A Wimborne Drama Production [www.WimborneDrama.co.uk](http://www.WimborneDrama.co.uk)