

WIMBORNE
DRAMA PRODUCTIONS



Calendar Girls

By Tim Firth

**Based on the Miramax motion picture
by Juliette Towhidi and Tim Firth**

**22 – 24 May 2025
Tivoli Theatre Wimborne**

Director's Notes

Meet the crew...



Sali Pike
Director



Calendar girls is the second play I have directed for Wimborne Drama Productions. It is an absolute joy to direct. I fell in love with this play, and these women, the first time I read it. Their stories, their relationships and their huge personalities are what make this play so special. I hope as you watch it you will love each of them as much as I do.

Calendar girls is one of the most realistic plays I have read. In terms of people, they are so funny and kind,

and yet all have struggles, hard times and flaws!

I was very grateful to find 6 women, who like the original Calendar Girls, were brave enough, go against the norm, lay aside all fancy costumes and get nude and stick the middle finger up to cancer!

Every person will know someone that this dreadful disease has affected or stolen and it's a privilege that we are able to also support local charity Teddy 20 in their fight to support families of children suffering with cancer.

I would like to give some special thanks to the unseen heroes of this play, those who helped the set come together, especially Nick Clark, but to every person from WDP who came and helped paint and build. Looking at the set I cannot forget the wonderful Leoh Hopkins, who took digital art in their stride and designed all the projector images.

The whole of the backstage crew are absolutely priceless and for a play with so many props and changes we never would have been able to bring this together if it wasn't for them. There are many individuals I could name, but check this programme, every name you see, even if you won't see them on the stage today, are essential for making this happen. I do however need to give a special thanks to my husband and children who have had to hear about Calendar Girls and my sudden ideas day and night for many months now, thank you for the support!

Tim Firth

Playwright

Tim was born and has lived his entire life in the North West of the UK. He was educated at Appleton Hall School in Warrington then at King's College, Cambridge where he set up a theatre company with Sam Mendes and wrote for the Footlights comedy team, with whom he later created the award-winning radio series *And Now In Colour* on Radio 4.

Tim's theatre credits include *Now Is Good*, *This Is My Family*, *Neville's Island*, *The Safari Party*, the musical *Our House*, *The Flint Street Nativity* and *Sign Of The Times*. His



play *Calendar Girls* broke all British records for a professional and amateur play, was nominated for an Olivier and won the Whatsonstage Best Comedy Award. *Calendar Girls The Musical*, co-written with Gary Barlow, opened at Leeds Opera house and transferred to the Phoenix Theatre, winning a Whatsonstage Award and an Olivier nomination, and his musical *The Band* won the MEN best Musical award. Tim recently collaborated with Gary Barlow on the show *A Different Stage* (West End).

Tim's film credits include *Blackball*, *Calendar Girls*, *Kinky Boots*, *The Wedding Video* and *Greatest Days*.

Work for television includes the Playhouse drama *Timeless*. His other TV credits include *Money For Nothing*, *Once Upon A Time In The North*, *Cruise Of The Gods*, *The Flint Street Nativity*, *Preston Front*. His children's comedy series *The Rottentrolls* won a BAFTA and was recently voted by *Radio Times* one of the top fifty children's shows of all time.



Taken from www.timfirth.com

Photo credit: The Arvon Foundation

How I became a Calendar Girl

By Angela Knowles

Article written for bloodcancer.org.uk

My late husband John was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma in February 1998. It was a terrible shock – John had never had a day's illness in his life.

We coped by focusing on short term-goals. Georgina, our daughter-in-law, suggested we give everyone we knew a sunflower plant to grow in the hope that when the flowers bloomed John would be in remission. But tragically, after only five months' illness, he died at the age of 54 on 22 July 1998, before the sunflowers were in bloom.



I remember one evening sitting around with the Women's Institute girls, before John even became ill, joking about the possibility of doing our own Pirelli-style nude calendar.

John was treated in Airedale Hospital by Ann Cuthbert – in the end they couldn't do any more for him. John wanted any chance that he had, so he went to Leeds where he was treated by Graham Smith, Sister Rose and a group of amazing nurses. John at this stage was too poorly to have too many visitors so it was mainly family who came, but my close friends Tricia and Lynda were fantastic.

He had one good night at home. He wanted a steak and a pint and because of the problems of cleanliness we took one of our glasses down to the pub to be filled for him. Tricia had decided to resurrect the calendar idea, partly to raise money for Blood Cancer UK (Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research as it was then) and partly to entertain John, and it was that night when he and the girls really talked about it and which month they should be. John said: "It's a fantastic idea but you're all talk, you'll never do it".

A company called Bermuda printed the calendar (and has done ever since). We wanted to print 1,000 and sell them for £5 each to make £5,000, but the printer said it wasn't worth printing less than 5,000. Tricia said we could pulp them in to briquettes to put on the barbecue if they didn't sell!

One afternoon, shortly after he died, Tricia appeared at my door with a clipboard. "Are we going to do this calendar or not?" she said. "Even if we don't sell any, at least we'll have tried to do something."

Terry Logan took wonderful photographs of us all and included a sunflower on each picture as an emblem of the Calendar Girls. When I saw the calendar for the first time, I cried. It was the first time that I thought it was going to sell. Four of us went to the Women's Institute HQ (where we were surprised not to be served tea and cakes), to show them the calendar. We'd deliberately put the word 'Alternative' on the front in case WI didn't like it – but, unlike in the later film, they loved it.

The calendar first became available on 12 April 1999. That month, we had a small press launch for the calendar at the local pub. We thought it'd just be a small family occasion so had just arranged to have a few bottles of wine and some nibbles there. We broke our own press embargo (we didn't know what one was in those days!) and heard Terry Wogan talking about it ahead of the launch. So when we arrived at the pub it was mayhem: there were vans and satellite dishes everywhere – we couldn't get in!

Our story was all over the news and the initial run of calendars we'd had printed were snapped up. So we reprinted and reprinted: the pub eventually shipped 56,000 calendars, putting on extra shifts and not charging a penny!

By October, they couldn't keep up with demand so the Post Office helped. We were receiving about 400 letters a day and we couldn't have done any of it without Roy the postman! It was so wonderful to see people like Roy recognised for the part they played in the calendar's success: he was invited to a lunch at Clarence House with Prince Charles and Camilla – his first time out of Yorkshire.

Then there was the question of what to do with the money we'd raised. Some of the girls had already climbed the Three Peaks in memory of John, and had asked Ann Cuthbert at Airedale Hospital where the money should go. She recommended Blood Cancer UK. So we presented a cheque for £322,000 to the charity and thought that was it. But as everyone knows, it wasn't!

We went to places and met people I never thought we would: we met Michael Palin, appeared at the Royal Variety Performance and met Prince Charles, and personally delivered calendars to the Queen and Queen Mother – and received personal thank-yous!

We promoted the calendar in the US, sold calendars at the Rockefeller Centre in New York, went on the Barbara Walters show and to the LA Bookfair, and in January 2000 were on the front cover of the New York Times.

It was then that Hollywood came calling and the Calendar Girls film was made. In total it took four-and-a-half years to make, on a very small budget. Richard Branson flew us first class to open the LA Film Festival. We didn't plan to meet the actresses in the film because they needed the film characters to develop independently of us. But one day Julie Walters (who played me) called, we met, and it was like we'd known each other forever.

It ended up grossing \$20 million. It was followed by an internationally acclaimed stage show, not to mention all the merchandise – all of which Blood Cancer UK benefitted from.

I'm just so delighted that this story, which is so dear to my heart, has raised so much money for Blood Cancer UK. We did the calendar because we wanted to raise money in John's memory and to support research into better treatments for those with lymphoma. Out of the tragedy of John's death has come something very special. Everything we do is born of love for him. We've met so many wonderful people – and raised over £5 million for Blood Cancer UK to help beat blood cancer.

And now there's a musical! I loved The Full Monty musical and saw it on Broadway. I'm dreaming of the same for The Girls...

Raising money for a good cause

Since 1999 when the original Calendar Girls decided to sell their nude calendar they have raised over £3 million for Blood Cancer UK! The legacy that these women have left is life changing and their story has inspired a film, a musical and the play you are watching here at the Tivoli Theatre.



Wimborne Drama have decided to use this production to raise money for charity too, and have decided to support a local cancer charity. Teddy20 is based in Blandford and offer emotional and financial assistance to children and young individuals who are courageously battling cancer and navigating the challenges of treatment. They strive to alleviate the burdens that cancer brings by extending a helping hand to both the young patients and their families. By fostering a community of compassion,

understanding, and solidarity, they aim to not only provide practical financial aid to ease the strains of medical or funeral costs but also to offer a shoulder to lean on during the toughest times.

There will be buckets in the foyer after the performance, if you wish to make a donation.

OUR VERY OWN CALENDAR!

Some members of our cast and crew have very bravely bared all to create our own 'nude' 2026 calendar! They will be available to buy in the foyer. All profits (£5.00 per calendar) will be donated to Teddy20.



Calendar Girls

By Tim Firth

The Cast



Chris	LESLEY JAMES
Annie	JULIE SISSONS
Jessie	HEATHER BIRCHENOUGH
Cora	LEAH JANE
Celia	BETH MORRIS
Ruth	TRACEY NICHOLLS
Marie	KELLY WEBB
John	RICHARD CAWTE
Rod	COLIN PILE
Liam	JAMES TURRALL
Lawrence	DAVID BEDDARD-BANKS
Elaine	MELODY UTLEY
Brenda Hulse	DEBBIE SOUTHERN
Lady Cravenshire	CHERYL CONNOR

Production Acknowledgements

This production would not have been possible without the generous help and support of Beaucroft College, Daisy Graphic, Anthony Cutler, Forest FM, Gullivers Bookshop, Leo Hopkins, South Coast Artificial Grass, Dorset Artificial Grass, Dr. Andy McVean, Victoria Players, Radio Wimborne, Stour and Avon Magazine, Tivoli Theatre, and Viewpoint.

Produced by Wimborne Drama Productions at the Tivoli Theatre, May 22 -24, 2025. This amateur production of "Calendar Girls" is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals Ltd. on behalf of Samuel French Ltd. www.concordtheatricals.co.uk.

The Creative Team

Director	SALI PIKE
Set Designer	NICK CLARK
Stage Manager	SUZANNE VINEY
Properties/ASMs	DEE HAWES
	TONY FELTHAM
	ANDY GILL
	PAUL SENITT
Sound	NICK CLARK
Music Composer	ANDY GILL
Book Cover for rehearsals	RICHARD SCOTSON
Publicity & Programme	BOO FELTHAM
<i>For the Tivoli Theatre:</i>	
Production Manager	KYLE BEST
Lighting	CHANDLER WHITELOCK

The play takes place in the present day in the village of Knapely in Yorkshire

Act 1, Scene 1: The church hall, autumn.

Act 1, Scene 2: The following winter.

Act 1, Scene 3: The following spring.

Act 1, Scene 4: John's hill, early summer.

Act 1, Scene 5: The church hall, later that summer.

Act 1, Scene 6: Night, a few days later.

20 minute interval

Act 2, Scene 1: The WI conference, London.

Act 2, Scene 2: The church hall, the following day.

Act 2, Scene 3: A few days later.

Act 2, Scene 4: A few days later.

Act 2, Scene 5: Later the same day.

Act 2, Scene 6: The next day.

Act 2, Scene 7: Late summer.

Act 2, Scene 8: John's hill, half an hour later.



Meet the cast...



Lesley James
Chris

Meet the cast...



Julie Sissons
Annie

Meet the cast...



Heather Birchenough
Jessie

Sunflowers...



follow the sun: Young sunflowers exhibit heliotropism, meaning they turn their heads to follow the sun from east to west throughout the day.

Meet the cast...



Leah Jane
Cora

Meet the cast...



Beth Morris
Celia

Meet the cast...



Tracey Nicholls
Ruth

Meet the cast...



Kelly Webb
Marie

Sunflowers...



can grow very tall: The tallest sunflower on record reached 30 feet 1 inch (9.17 meters), grown in Germany in 2014.

Meet the cast...



Richard Cowie
John

Meet the cast...



Colin Pile
Red

Meet the cast...



James Turrall
Liam

Meet the cast...



David Beddard-Banks
Lawrence

Meet the cast...



Melody Utley
Elaine

Meet the cast...



Debbie Southern
Brenda Hulse

Meet the cast...



Cheryl Connor
Lady Cravenshire

Sunflowers...



come in many colours: While yellow is the classic look, sunflowers also come in red, orange, and even purple hues.

Native to the Americas: Sunflowers originated in North America and were domesticated over 4,500 years ago by Native Americans.

They were used for more than beauty: Native Americans used sunflowers for food, oil, dye, and even medicine.

Meet the crew...



Nick Clark
Set Design & Sound

Meet the crew...



Suzanne Viney
Stage Manager

Meet the crew...



Dee Hawes
Props / ASM

Meet the crew...



Andy Gill
Music Composer & Props

Meet the crew...



Tony Feltham
Props

Meet the crew...



Richard Scotson
Rehearsal Prompt

About Wimborne Drama Productions

Established in 1928, we are a renowned, award-winning amateur theatre company producing plays at the Tivoli Theatre in Wimborne.

Join us!

Would you like to be part of a sociable, kind, inclusive group of friends? Our members have more than a shared interest in drama we also have a book club, host dinner parties, meet for regular evenings at the pub and go on theatre trips.

We stage three productions each year. We always welcome new members, with or without previous experience. As well as those with a liking for acting or directing, people with a keen interest in the less glamorous, but equally valuable backstage roles (set construction, properties, make-up etc) are warmly welcomed into the group.

We are actively seeking:

- Male and female actors in their 20s and 30s.
- Members interested in backstage roles such as:
 - * Stage Manager
 - * Assistant Stage Manager
 - * Sound
 - * Props
 - * Costumes
 - * Make-up
 - * Set Design and/or construction
 - * Prompt

Our current members can teach and mentor anyone new to a role. Backstage members are welcome to audition for acting roles and tread the boards, but are never put under pressure to perform.

The group members meet at 7.30pm on the last Wednesday of the month and rehearsals take place on Monday and Wednesday evenings. Membership costs £35 per annum, for more information contact Tracey Nicholls via email: secretary@wimboredramaproductions.com

Coming soon to The Tivoli

JEKYLL & HYDE

By Robert Louis Stevenson

Adapted by Neil Bartlett

16 - 18 October 2025

Directed by
Shelley Barter

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SAVE THE DATE...

Our first production for 2026
will be performed

19 - 21 February 2026

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(H signifies honorary)

To enquire about becoming a
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Membership costs £40.00 per
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1 complimentary ticket &
programme per Patron per
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JEKYLL & HYDE

16TH - 18TH OCTOBER 2025

TIVOLI THEATRE, WIMBORNE

EVENINGS 7:30PM - £18.00, SATURDAY MATINEE 2:30PM - £16.00

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