

## COMPTON LITTLE THEATRE

*Dad's Army*

By Jimmy Perry and David Croft

October 2009

### Review

For this production Compton Village Hall had been authentically transformed into a 1940s version of Walmington-on-Sea's Village Hall. A bevy of beautiful Land Girls was on hand to show us to our seats and act as waitresses.

*Mums Army* opened the first half. Captain Mainwaring (Roger Johnson) decided to enlist women into the platoon to assist with the war effort. Without consulting the cast list, it was easy to identify the characters, as they were portrayed faithfully.

Captain Mainwaring expressed mild irritation with his platoon throughout. Corporal Jones was played brilliantly by David Ford, who did not disappoint the audience by omitting his character's familiar catchphrase of "they like it up'em". Private Frazer was played by Robin Matthews, who expertly captured the slightly manic nature of his character, though his Scottish accent was a little difficult to pinpoint. Sergeant Wilson's rather languid manner was superbly expressed by Tony Richardson and was a great foil to the impatience of Captain Mainwaring.

The ladies who volunteered to assist the platoon were all played with great professionalism, particularly Mrs Gray (Gillian Walker) and Mrs Fox, played by Alison Hough, who not only portrayed her character with great gusto, but was also responsible for the musical direction and choreography and, with others, for the costumes.

The second half of the programme was *The Godiva Affair*. The platoon practised their Morris Dancing skills, anticipating that these would be the highlight of the Parade in aid of the Spitfire Fund. Meanwhile, Hodges, the officious ARP Warden, ably played by Andy Smith, and his team were planning to choose a "Lady Godiva" from the ladies of the parish as their contribution to the Parade, in direct competition to the Morris Dancing. As might have been anticipated, it all ended harmoniously!

The production was interspersed with community singing led with great verve by the Land Girls' Chorus and there were special guest appearances by Vera Lynn (Emma Hough), Gracie Fields (Rachel Jenner) and Anne Shelton (Liz Loveland), who all caught beautifully the mood of those times as they sung the hits of the day. One tiny niggle was that just now and then, their voices were slightly drowned out by the backing music. The Andrews Sisters sang "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" brilliantly and generously treated us to an encore.

As ever, the whole production was most professional. Costumes, lighting, choreography, stage sets and all the other "backstage" contributions were superb.

Great performances by all members of the cast, contributed to one of the most enjoyable productions yet staged by Compton Little Theatre. It was delightful to have a meal served between the two parts of the production and a relief to find that authenticity had not spread as far as the menu – no Spam or dried eggs were served - but instead delicious contemporary food.