

THE STAINBECK PLAYERS



At the end of the highly successful 'last ever' pantomime in February 2016, the curtain came down on 62 years of plays and pantomimes which have been a creative way of entertaining many people of all ages, and raising a considerable sum of money over the years to support the work and mission of Stainbeck Church.

Why did it have to end? It began as a small group of local Church people putting on a play to celebrate the 23rd Church Anniversary. Within a few years, the Youth Players were formed and at least two plays were presented each year, and soon after, to these productions, was added the Pantomime.

And then the Society stopped developing. It was understandable, but when you stop developing you begin to feel your age. The junior players became the senior players. With a large cast of all ages, the Pantomime

became the main event, and then, as 3 Act Plays became more of a challenge, the only event.

The Pantomime has always been a challenge creatively. That was where the pleasure (for me) lay. It continuously evolved, though, significantly, the leading names on the programme of this year's Mother Goose also feature in the 1992 production of the same pantomime. (That year we also presented two plays, the second of which was, the appropriately named 'Happiest Days of Your Life'). More recently, the Pantomime became a different kind of challenge, firstly, to cast, and then to hope that everyone would be 'alright on the night'.

Many people of all ages have been involved in the Stainbeck Players, and particularly the Pantomime. But it has been the enthusiasm and commitment of a small group of people which ensured that the Stainbeck Players survived fundamental changes in the way we live, and in Stainbeck Church itself. That there has been, and still is, a small group of people with a commitment, over many years, to Stainbeck Church as well as to the Stainbeck Players, unfortunately, inevitably, and somewhat ironically, limits the future of the Stainbeck Players.

On a personal note, I'll look back on the pantomimes, from Abiyoyo in 1973, onwards, in the same way as I look back on the YHA holidays which began in the 50's, with so many happy memories, and great appreciation of the people without whom none of it would have happened, and of Stainbeck Church, which provided the framework and the opportunities.

The members of the Stainbeck Players decided at the AGM to formally 'wind up' the organisation. This was primarily to release the funds for Church use. But once a Stainbeck Player always a Stainbeck Player, and, who knows, there may be yet more to come. Can we really live without our audience, who have played such an essential role throughout? Only time alone, the one thing that never ends, can tell.

Peter Craske