



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LADS

It was back in the history of time (1978 actually) when the Lewes Arms Dramatic Society first took to the boards with their version of Snow White and the Seven Dwarves. This creative epic followed a throwaway remark from the landlady at the time who was being treated to the sight of her regulars appearing every Sunday evening dressed as Long John Silver Impersonators. This inexplicable and very, very silly course of events having been inspired by the BBC who were screening "Treasure Island" as their Sunday afternoon classic serial. Maggie Owen (for it was she) thought that she might divert these dangerous lunatics into an activity that would remove them from polite society (and the Front Bar) and also raise money for charity, so she suggested that they "ought to do a pantomime". So they did.

At the time, the Lewes by-pass was being built by a fine bunch of chaps who had made the Lewes Arms their spiritual home and their Gaffer, Big Frank "The Bypass" Thomas, was quick to take up the pantomime challenge. A very motley crew of "thespians" were recruited by Frank whose creative genius was second to none and John Owen, the landlord, being a great supporter of the RNLI, suggested that any funds raised by the pantomime should be donated to the Lewes Lifeboat campaign. So it was.

The production of an annual adult pantomime at the Lewes Arms soon became a tradition and the LADS have "creatively" interpreted many well known pantomime tales - Aladdin, Sleeping Beauty, Peter Pan, Cinderella, Dick Whittington, Jack & The Beanstalk, Babes In The Wood, Alice in Lewesland, Pinocchio and the list goes on.

Various stalwart directors have presided over the event including Andy "Scoop" Freeman and Ron Brown with Adam Frost currently reclining in the Directorial Chair. In 2007 the LADS went "On Tour" at the Lewes Constitutional Club in a production of Babes In The Wood directed by Adam Sobot. In 2008, the cast and crew were back at the Lewes Arms for their 30th Anniversary Performance of Cinderella which played to packed houses. In 2012, the ensemble created a particularly topical version of Aladdin which was the 35th Annual Pantomime. Remarkable, two of the original cast still remain (the Director and Producer) but of course, they were but children when they first toddled onstage back in 1978.

Since 1978, the LADS have raised around £50,000 for various charities and local causes which have included the Sasha Roberts Scholarship Fund, St. Peter & St. James Hospice, The Burns Unit at Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead, The Nutty Wizard Community Cafe, Pells Pool Campaign, Headway, and the Victoria Hospital League of Friends.

The panto has always been very generously supported by our audiences and successive landlords at The Lewes Arms who allow us to invade their slightly private parts during production week regardless of the general confusion that the LADS can sometimes create. But then mystification and a LADS production go hand in hand. The cast are sometimes mystified as to the whereabouts of their lines (as indeed is The Prompt) and the plot often bears a merely coincidental resemblance to the original version of whatever traditional is being reinterpreted. Fortunately, panto aficionados remain unconcerned. It's what they demand, despite our increasingly glitzy production values (pyro and stuff!) and the genuine talent that now finds itself treading the LADS panto boards.



The Lewes Arms Dramatic Society

