

A BRIEF HISTORY

THE LEWES ARMS DRAMATIC SOCIETY



Snow White 1978 - the first production

What we now know as the Lewes Arms Dramatic Society first took themselves to the boards in 1978 with their version of Snow White and the Seven Dwarves. This creative epic following a throwaway remark from the landlady at the time who was being treated to the sight of her front bar regulars appearing every Sunday evening dressed as Long John Silver Impersonators. These japes having been inspired by the BBC who were screening "Treasure Island" as their Sunday afternoon classic serial. Maggie Owen (aforementioned landlady) thought that she might divert these buffoons into an activity that would also raise money for charity so 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. He recruited a motley crew of "thespians" and John Owen, the landlord, being a great supporter of the RNLI, suggested that any funds raised by the proposed pantomime should be donated to the Lewes Lifeboat Campaign. From this time forward the production of an annual adult pantomime at the Lewes Arms became a tradition and the LADS have subverted most of the well known pantomime tales.

Various stoical directors have presided with Jon Borthwick currently reclining in the Directorial Chair since 2024. In 2007 the LADS went “On Tour” at the Lewes Con Club in a production of *Babes In The Wood* directed by Adam Sobot.

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 Pells Pool Campaign, Headway, the Victoria Hospital League of Friends and the Bevern Trust.

The pantomime has always been very generously supported by our audiences and successive landlords at The Lewes Arms and we’re very grateful for being allowed access to the more private parts of the pub for so many years.

In 2020 we somehow, and unwittingly, managed to put on a performance less than a fortnight before the country went into lockdown. This would be the last pantomime all the while Covid lurked in the wings and it was three years before we made a triumphant return in March 2023. The pandemic years brought about change and it was appropriate for us to move the production to a bigger venue. We were welcomed very warmly by the Lewes Con Club and thank them for their hospitality. This year we return there with our 46th production - *Mother Goose*. We have not cut ties with the Lewes Arms however and are delighted to be able to hold our rehearsals there. After all, without this legendary public house, there would never have been a pantomime. Even if the LADS production is ‘like no other’!



'Three Years Later' - the cast of the LADS in Robin Hood 2023