‘Magic Moments’

The Jubilee Play

By Mark Currey
The Crown of Life

All around us this world can change – be it quickly or slowly,
And each person must wear the Crown – be they lordly or lowly.
   The Crown Of Life has so many jewels and so many faces,
   Passing from each generation to the next in different places.

The Crown Of Life reveals such love and laughter all around,
Where the memories of elders mix with a baby’s sound…
The world may change. Yet life and love remain simply true.
   The old Crown can exist happily in every time so new.

When my father passed it to me, this quiet homely place
   Was a very different community with a very different face.
Our water came from standpipes. No toilet or heating inside.
   Yet, like today, we had friends to cherish and secrets to hide.

Many shops were in our village. No computers or TV to play.
   Yet our politicians were still as unbelievable as today!
Weston-super-Mare, to us, seemed an exotic location;
   It wasn’t considered a come-down to have a “staycation”!

But the trees, stones and river now laugh at my rhyme…
   For they know the real meaning of the passage of time.
The Crown passes through many hands and so many lives
   While they watch how our village just changes and survives.

Many families, one family. We may change in our scale and scope.
   Yet, whatever the progress or setbacks, somehow we all cope.
For the Crown Of Life is passed. It is offered from above.
   Protect it for your generation, with honour and with love.
Ilmington is a special place; some families in our Warwickshire corner of the North Cotswold’s can trace their ancestors back 400 years. It’s somewhere folks find hard to leave and, as a place to call home, difficult to beat.

So what better way to mark HM the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee than to look back to the first decade of her reign and to capture local memories of those days for posterity?

Those of us who lived through the 1950s will recall it as a period of immense change in Britain as the country recovered from the aftermath of the Second World War; change which accelerated after HM the Queen’s accession in 1952 and the birth of the new Elizabethan age.

How did the villagers who lived here during that time react to those changes? And how did life in the wider world impinge on our remote rural community? Here was a story waiting to be told and people from the village who, with their various talents, could tell it. This could be a genuine community venture.

The Heritage Lottery Fund agreed and funded the project with a generous grant, making it possible for us to create a unique play about village life sixty years’ ago.

The year long project began by recording the memories of people who lived in Ilmington during the 1950’s. Their oral histories then provided a wealth of material which evolved through seven drafts into ‘Magic Moments.’

The main challenge we faced was getting the balance right between historical accuracy and keeping the story interesting and real. How to blend privies and pig sticking with Dansettes and motorbikes, stilettos and Brylcream?

We hope our community play will capture the spirit of the times in the place where we are privileged to live today.

Colin Edwards
Producer/Director
Old Elsie
  Lindsey Martin
Elsie Crabb
  Stacey Mole
Dot Crabb
  Nicola Amphlett
Bob Crabb
  David Gresham
Harry Crabb
  Freddie Barnard
Reg
  Ben Webber
Betty
  Molly Smith
Jean
  Helen Broomfield
George
  Andrew Trotman
Mrs Jewsbury
  Fiona Tustain
Mrs Grimley
  Liz Garton
Sybil
  Mary Trotman
Beryl
  Jane Quinn
Mrs Hall
  Jenny Phillips
Sam Bennett
  Robert Lister
PC Perry
  Chris Goble
Phyllis
  Donna Law
Bill
  Gary Hall
Jennifer
  Grace Gardiner

Miss Hardiman
Miss Hardiman
Arthur
  David
  Alf
Mrs Biles
  Janet
  Ted
  Mabel
Wendy
  Wilf
  Vi
Barry
  The Midwife
Mrs Handy
  Dr Harris
  Jeremy
Lads at the dance
  Margaret

With Thanks to
Hugh Beecham, Percy Caufield, Shirley Dingley, Bill Naish, Peter Robinson, Linda Mace of Cokethorpe School for the loan of props and costumes and Ilmington Village Hall Committee and 20:20 Vision for their support.
Introducing:
The Baby
Mia Law
Charlie the Dog
Himself

And Featuring:
Frank the Bandleader
John Sargent
Dolores
Charlotte Wright
Marlene
Laura Nelson

With Frank’s Band:
Keyboard
Will Allen
Drums
Robin Payne
Guitar
Leon Hale
John Ciriani

The Fiddler
Karina Clifford

Production Team

Lighting Director
Martin Seymour
Technicians
James Ashmore
Harry Wyles
Rob Hilton
Shirley Maybey
Sarah Hobson
Sian Brooks
Rosie Ashmore
Lesley Gallant

Rehearsal Prompt
Sharon Bernard
Chaperone
Paula Dixon
Script Adviser
Irene Sabin
Graphic Designer
Nick Wilmot
Box Office
Vince Gajny

Project Accountant
Julia Gajny
Project Assessor
Maurice Ribbans

Thanks for the Memories
Anne Brain, Betty Bryan, Ernie Cook, John Cooke, Arthur Clifford, Carol & Margaret Freeman, Ken & Jeannie Hall, Terry Hall, Jack & June Hands, Bill Sabin, David Sabin, Irene Sabin, Alice Terry, Christine Warmington, Tony Wilkins and David Wilkins
A few of the faces behind some of the real characters who appear in our story: PC Perry (left), Mrs Biles (top right), Phillip and Barbara Jewsbury (bottom middle) and Miss Hardiman (bottom right). Sam Bennett, Mrs Grimley and Mrs Handy were also well loved villagers.

Mark Currey: Playwright

Mark trained at the Central School and has worked as an actor and writer for over twenty-five years. He has appeared in numerous theatre productions across the UK, as well as in Vienna, Vancouver and in the West End. He has a wealth of TV and Radio credits.

As a writer Mark won the Hackney poetry competition for his collection “Dried Flowers” and his one man play “Moments of Vision”, about Thomas Hardy has toured extensively. His play “The Last Country House” was broadcast on BBC Radio 4 and his pantomime Dick Whittington had a successful run at New Theatre, Exeter. His adaptation of “A Christmas Carol” has been produced in Warwick and in America. Mark’s new play “Over the Purple Moor” is being developed for the Bike Shed Theatre in Exeter. He has lived in Ilmington for eleven years.
This Project aimed not only to record memories of the era, but to bring together villagers of all ages; and in particular to bring alive the 1950s for today’s younger generation.

The Heritage Lottery Funding has enabled us to work extensively with the children of Ilmington School:

**A Fifties Tea Party** provided a fun way of learning history, with Class 4 inviting older residents to chat and reminisce over fish paste sandwiches, jelly and blancmange. A lot of fun was had by all!

**Music and Dance workshops** led to the school production of a specially written play ‘A Fifties Christmas’ which was performed to packed houses at the Village Hall.

**Poetry sessions** enjoyed by children throughout the school produced some creative work about the Diamond Jubilee.

**The Jubilee Exhibition** features samples of the children’s reports on all these activities, plus some of their poems are currently on display at Ilmington Manor and form part of our exhibition of daily life in the 1950s.

Lofts and attics around the village have produced a plethora of memorabilia of the decade. Every exhibit has a story to tell, making this a very personal and fascinating walk down memory lane.

**The Exhibition is open from 2-6pm daily from Saturday June 2 to Tuesday June 5. Admission is free.**

**The Jubilee Dance** has involved a series of singing and dance sessions ready for an evening of fun on Bank Holiday Monday, when we recreate the regular Saturday night dances famous for miles around because of the Village Hall’s sprung floor. **The first dance is at 7.30pm and admission is free.**

The Heritage Lottery funding has also enabled us to purchase a digital camera, tape recorder, staging, extra lighting, display boards and stage flats for village use.

The memories encapsulated in ‘Magic Moments’ have been recorded for posterity and, along with the play manuscripts for both ‘A Fifties Christmas’ and ‘Magic Moments’, the exhibition catalogue and footage of the entire project, will be archived in the County Records. Material will also be available via our special website: www.fabulous-50s.com