

Many of you will know by now that Gavin McLaggan died on 28th August, at the age of 82, after a relatively short illness. Gavin was closely associated with the Detling Players for well over 30 years, and was responsible for so many of our most memorable productions.

At the service of celebration of Gavin's life held at St. Martin of Tours in Detling, an old friend of the Players, Marian Baldwin, read this moving tribute to him, which I am reproducing in full

The Detling Players were inaugurated in the 1970s by Rosemary Hawthorn, the wife of the then curate John Hawthorn. Gavin's early participation started by encouraging his children, Sheena and James, who were then quite young, to join as a way of building their confidence. The Detling Players grew to be a respected group in the County, with a wide following of supporters, visiting Directors and actors. They have achieved a number of awards in almost every category in County Drama Festivals.

I first met the Detling Players in 1990. I was adjudicating the Kent Drama Festival and the Detling Players' entry was "Lord Arthur Savile's Crime". Gavin played the part of Baines the Butler. I remember negotiating the steps off the wings to backstage and meeting Gavin. Gavin's enthusiasm simply bubbled over, and he had an infectious charisma. I found myself saying that the Detling Players were a talented, promising company, and if, at any time, in any way, I could be of help in a production, I would be happy to do so. Gavin (as you may know) had an accurate recall of conversations. It was a year or so later when I received a phone call from him. "Marian, you offered to help the Detling Players; well, we've got a problem. We're putting on an Open Air production of A Midsummer Night's Dream, and our Hippolyta has had to withdraw. We were wondering if you would play the part for us". That was not quite the 'help' I had intended. I hadn't been part of an acting group for 20 years! Gavin's powers of persuasion, I later learned, were legendary. And so began my association with the Detling Players, and a friendship with Sue and Gavin that I value beyond words.

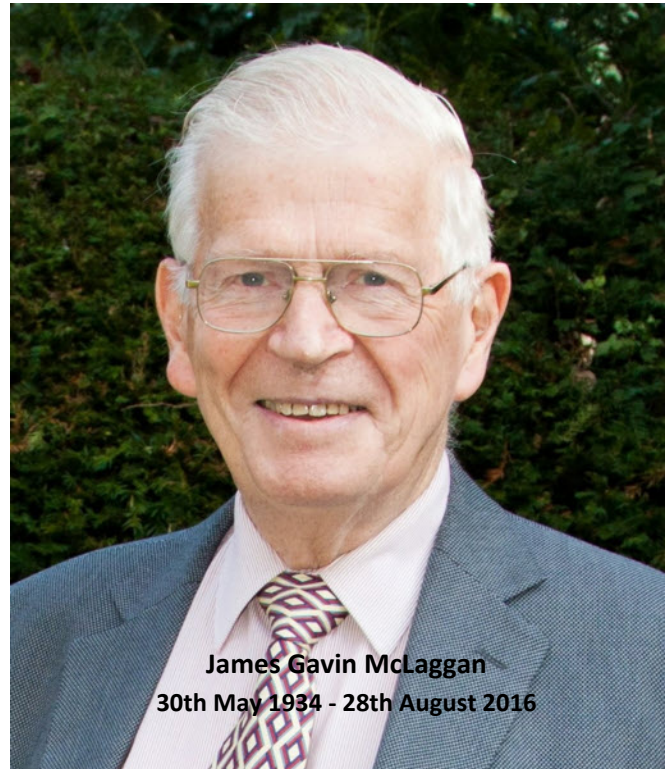
I soon learned that an important feature of Detling's Open Air productions was that there was always heavy rainfall for at least one night of the performances. Gavin tramped about in his wellingtons, smiling. When Gavin smiled, everyone smiled with him...even in squelching mud. I have to tell you that Lysander, one of the young lovers, lying on drenched grass for much of the performance, was none other than our Reverend Chris Lavender [who conducted the service].

When Gavin retired from the Maidstone Practice, his enthusiasm for theatre led him to take an Actor/Director course at The London Academy of Performing Arts. The Detling Players benefited from this enormously. Gavin ran Winter Classes in Speaking Shakespeare; The Sonnets; Henry V prologues - inspirational evenings.

Then came a crisis. The Kent Drama Association was on the point of being dissolved. A General Meeting was held to discuss the problems. Gavin's articulate and passionate appeals produced the almost unanimous vote to try to continue for one more year (as I remarked earlier, he was a master of persuasion). Gavin's enthusiasm and cajoling smiles that year meant that the Kent Drama Association has continued into the 21st. Century, and the Detling Players continue to play their part.

Gavin never stopped working with and for the Players, and they owe their contribution to the community in no small measure to his unflagging enthusiasm and commitment. That is a significant part of Gavin's legacy to this village and to the County.

I am one of the many here today who has been privileged to know Gavin and count him as a friend



James Gavin McLaggan
30th May 1934 - 28th August 2016



The next Detling Players production is "Hay Fever", by Noel Coward. It will be performed at the Village Hall on 10th, 11th and 12th November, with two performances on the Saturday (the matinee at 2.30 pm). After a minor hiccup, the play has been fully cast and our Director, John Munson, is making strong progress with the rehearsals.

John recently wrote a piece for the Detling News, as follows:

Who is the lucky boy? Well, I must say first that Detling Players, following their great success with Ladies in Lavender have chosen their next production. On the 10th, 11th and 12th of November, it will be Noel Coward's hoot of a play, Hay Fever. The Player's last show, Ladies in Lavender, received The Kent Drama Association's accolades for its Wonderful Set and its Sound and Kathryn Shirley was awarded Best Supporting Actress, Owen Luckhurst was nominated for Best Actor and young Richard Finn shared runner up Best Director. All of this glorious drama took place in our Village Hall ! In Detling!

In November it will be laughs galore. Who is the aforementioned lucky boy? Its me, I'm the director of this new production. The Director is a very privileged person. He or She gets to see all of the rehearsals. There is the miracle of mem-

ory, when the actors know their lines. There is the gradual creation, before one's very eyes, of the set. The time when costumes appear, when hard to find properties are discovered on a resident's mantelpiece. So, the director sees all this hard work, like magic gradually form itself into a production. It involves carpentry, electrical work, needle and thread, speakers and printing, planning the bar and selling tickets and others. It involves a lot of people the audience never see. I am lucky as the director, because The Detling Players has a brilliant back stage team.

We need actors to put on a play. We already have an excellent cast, and have already started rehearsals in the old school. Already I get to laugh at every rehearsal when the characters deliver Coward's brilliant lines. It really is a very funny play, it'll be your fault if you miss the experience. The Detling Players really are on a roll. I really am the lucky boy. You have been warned.

The committee decided recently to dedicate the production of "Hay Fever" to the memory of Gavin McLaggan, in view of his huge contribution to the Players over many years. We will miss his laughter which would have inspired us even more...

As a result of this decision, we need more than ever to make sure this play is a huge success, so please PLEASE forward this newsletter to anyone on your email address list who you think might be interested in coming to see the Players perform this brilliant play. We need your support, and the support of your friends. This really is the best way to spread the news, and as John Munson wrote above, it is an experience not to be missed!

Forthcoming events:

28th September:

Play reading "Theatrical Knights" by local playwright Dennis Lipscombe, at West Court, The Street

26th October:

Stage management workshop, with Chris Hall and Dickie Dawson, at the Old School Hall

Both events start at 7.30 pm.

New Website

Take a look at our new website, and you will be amazed at the changes. We now have a professional website designer who is keen and enthusiastic. What we need now are contributions from you, our members and supporters. There may well be an archive of old programmes, photos and flyers for all the many productions over the vast eons of time that the Players have been active. If there is - I don't have it! So I would love to receive, either in printed form or via email, and old documents you may have so that we can backfill our history on the site. I am sure you know my email address but here it is anyway: johnpgwatson@talktalk.net. Or call me to discuss what we can do with any historic material you have on 01622 739622. Thanks!