

ReView

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We do like to be beside the seaside!

ON WHAT must have been the worst weekend of this dreadful summer for many parts of the British Isles, sand, sea, sun and laughter came to Chideock Village Hall when the Chideock Players performed *Sand Castles*, writes **JILLY DOBINSON**.

This extremely well-crafted ensemble piece came from the pen of Bob Larbey who famously co-wrote *The Good Life* for television. He also had huge success with his scripts for *A Fine Romance* and *As Time Goes By*.

The action of the comedy centres round three beach huts owned by the Pattersons, the Billetts and the 'never to be seen' Woodersons, the latter family having been absent from the south coast seaside resort for a few seasons.

William and Margaret Patterson are a quiet, respectable, middle-class retired professional couple, whilst Stan and Bernice Billet are younger and certainly not quiet!

They are accompanied on their holiday by Stan's mother, played by Di Dowle and Bernice's sister Pauline, played by Catherine Batten. The two families are very distressed to learn that the Woodersons have rented their hut to the nouveau riche and very loud Doug who is accompanied by his teenage nubile nieces!

After discovering that Doug owns a chain of fish and chip shops he is instantly accepted by the 'hutters'!

They try very hard to deter the hoi polloi from encroaching upon the beach in front of their huts although they have no legal right to do so!

As the play progresses a trio of determined women decide to assert territorial rights over the space immediately in front of the huts and confrontation is inevitable! Mary Anne Rimer, Taz Moores and Moira Lucas played these cameo roles with conviction.

Chris Lambert and Debra Bates must be congratulated upon their wonderful portrayals as William and Margaret, the former convincing the audience that there was life in the old dog yet whilst the latter held everyone else together with her charm and sensible approach to every difficulty!

Leigh Conley gave a superb performance as the insecure, neurotic control-freak Stan and he was supported by Sali Douglas-Watson, who took the part of Bernice, his over-dressed and slightly tarty wife!

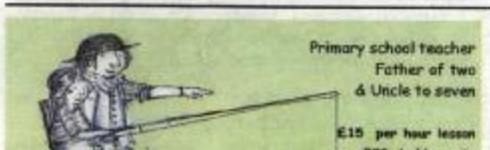
Keith Readings was very convincing as the laid-back, pragmatic Doug and Natalie Gale (new to the Players) and Alyssa West were charming and decorative as his teenage nieces. Nick Baker and Pat Anderson played cameo parts as two other stray 'beach' people.

Nick Baker must be applauded for his excellent direction of the piece and all those in the three audiences enjoyed a professional, entertaining and hilarious evening. Well done, Chideock Players!



▲ A tense moment during *Sand Castles*

Photo by **JOHN DOBINSON**



N.B. Natalie Gale wasn't new to the Players in this show but Alyssa West was!