
WB
DS
WEST BRIDGFORD DRAMATIC SOCIETY
THE ACCRINGTON PALS
PROGRAMME



CHAIR'S WELCOME

Welcome to our first production this season. We have been working on The Accrington Pals for several months, and earlier this year some of us travelled to Accrington, walked up Pendle Hill and visited a mill museum to understand the background of the play.

We hope you enjoy our production, which covers themes of war, and also the social impact on the people left behind. Our plays later this season include The Habits in February, and The Hound Of The Baskervilles in May 2027. Posters are included in this programme, and you can check the website for more details and tickets. We are a local drama group, and if you are interested in joining us there are many ways you can help. Whether it's acting or backstage roles, please check the website for information.

Enjoy!

Rob Dixon
Chair, WBDS



CAST

May - Lesley Flounders
Tom - Joe Moore
Eva - Rachel Lindsay
Ralph - Josh Plank
Annie - Linda Hoyland
Reggie - Dom Gaskell
Arthur - Rob Dixon
Sarah - Dawn Cochrane
Bertha - Emily Martin
Rivers - Bertie Black

There is one interval of 20 minutes when drinks and ice cream will be available.

Please remember to switch off mobile phones during the performance - even a screen can be distracting to the cast and other members of the audience. Thank you!

BACKGROUND

36 officers and 1,076 men reached the full strength required to form a battalion within ten days of recruitment opening (14–24 September 1914) and for this reason, the small mill town of Accrington and surrounding area was nationally already famous. Approximately 700 to 720 Accrington Pals (11th Service Battalion, East Lancashire Regiment) advanced into No Man's Land at the Battle of the Somme at 7:30 AM on 1st July 2016. Within 30 minutes there were 585 casualties and under 100 men attended roll call that evening.

As usual, two teams have worked together on bringing this story to the Studio. The 'creatives' have provided a setting with four themes: Firstly, the Accrington Victorian Market Hall where May, our protagonist, has her stall. The stall provides a civic setting for all that the local Edwardian community was nurturing: social change; non-conformist religion; economic downturn and the 'great unrest' during the development of socialism; propaganda and of course the emancipation of women. Secondly, May's kitchen provides a more intimate setting: women huddling – some easy with sharing their emotions, others repressed or perhaps coping by focusing on the future. The playwright touches on 'romantic friendship' i.e. the closeness of women who nurtured romanticism and were also legally free to pursue their relationships without breaking the law. Thirdly, the bleak war scene inspired, as the other scenes by the work of Paul Nash, war and British landscape artist. The fourth theme is Pendle Hill, a local landmark, mentioned in Mike Harding's folk song Accrington Pals. Lives' milestones are still commemorated by walking up Pendle (51 metres short of a mountain).

Our 'pals' male and female, would have walked up this hill to put a marker down on this event of the WW1 and the departure to war of the men from its surround. Several of us went to Lancashire this Spring. We visited a working mill where Accrington men and women would have worked; we watched the local clog dancers – clogs are a theme in the play, and we walked up Pendle Hill. By coincidence just as we were making our descent, five lads from Clitheroe arrived, excitedly taking selfies to nail their achievement. End of exams drew them to celebrate by walking up the hill. We explained why we wanted to photograph them and yes, of course they knew all about the Accrington Pals.

The men were slaughtered 110 years ago at the Battle of Somme. The women were left to re-envision their expectations of life, with broken hearts coupled, it must be said, with opportunity for some to secure advancement.

The Studio's cast has put their entire hearts into this production. We span several generations but all of us have stories and memorabilia related to this war and those that have followed. We have belly laughed at some antics that remind us so much of people, family, we know. We have cried repeatedly at the loss of those we are portraying on our stage, the Pals.

In gallant charge, in the World Wide War
As Pals, they fought and fell



DIRECTOR'S NOTES

My family all play tennis, unfortunately I never shared the skill or passion. At 12 years old I was a pretty good mimic and was shoved into the local drama club. I've remained a member of community theatre groups over the years, working backstage, acting, sitting on committees and latterly directing. WBDS has provided me with opportunities to continue my passion, and Accrington Pals is no exception. My grandfather fought in France during WW1. I have the postcard he sent to his sweetheart, who became my grandmother. My grandfather never talked about war; my grandmother led a peace march as WWII was declared - the story goes that my father signed up the next day! It was my mother who talked more about her experience, in the WAAF on the south coast, waiting for D Day. Her jitterbugging partner was an American G.I. who died in Normandy - Bill Brewer. It was my father who put his photo on our mantelpiece every 11th November and told us never to forget. I dedicate my efforts in supporting this production to Bill Brewer - different war, same tragedy.

- Barbara Seymour



MAY - LESLEY FLOUNDERS

I have been a member of WBDS since 2015, making my debut in the one-act play Daddy's Gone A-Hunting. I have since had the privilege of appearing in varied and challenging roles in plays such as Colder Than Here, Salt Of The Earth and most recently Di & Viv & Rose. The Accrington Pals is a thought provoking, heartbreaking, but sometimes funny play. May encapsulates the fear, pain and anger of the women who loved the Pals. It has been a pleasure to get to know her.

TOM - JOE MOORE



This is my first show with WBDS, and I'm delighted to be doing a play with a subject matter as moving as the Great War. I am delighted to be able to take part in such an incredible play with such a wonderful cast, and look forward to bringing the story of the Accrington Pals to a wider audience. I first became interested in studying the First World War after reading a book produced by the Imperial War Museum called: "The Forgotten Voices Of The Somme" by Joshua Levine and building an Airfix trench model with my grandfather.



EVA - RACHEL LINDSAY

Lincolnshire born, bred and living, this is my first play with WBDS. I have so loved getting to work with such a welcoming and passionate group of people. My favourite plays are always the historical ones, especially those that tell the stories of those often left out of the history books... those left behind. I like Eva a lot: not least because she gets to sing, but also because of how lovely it is see her grow in confidence, as she learns to love the women she meets in Accrington. I have been happy to find that none of the women in this play are stagnant, as I loathe having to play two-dimensional damsels.

RALPH - JOSH PLANK



Accrington Pals will be my second play with the lovely WBDS - though I have been on stage since I was a child, thanks to my parents who were very involved (and still are to this day!) in the theatre. This play means a lot to me with its themes of anti-war and strife for those at home. My grandfather and uncle both served in the Royal Marines, but sadly my uncle was KIA when I was only two years old. I was raised very much against the idea of ever joining the military and so being able to play a young man so insistent in heading off to war, where he thinks valour and honour await him, is a perspective I am excited to portray, alongside my very talented cast and crew. I do hope you enjoy our efforts.



ANNIE - LINDA HOYLAND

I have been with WBDS for less than a year and am getting to know the more members. I really enjoy being part of such a friendly society whilst rekindling my love of theatre both on and off stage. It is a privilege to work with such a talented and dedicated cast and crew. Annie, the very loud and disapproving character I play, takes me straight back to my childhood and a neighbour of my grandmothers, who I am convinced was known to the playwright as their personalities are so similar. The Accrington Pals resonates with me as my grandfather served with the Yorks & Lancs Regiment and miraculously survived battles at both the Somme and Ypres.

REGGIE - DOM GASKELL



I joined WBDS in 2015 and have been involved in one form or other in many productions since; onstage, backstage, and even doing lighting design for a handful. After taking a short break recently, I directed my first play bringing The Signalman to stage. As a parent to a toddler, I can only imagine how the mothers of Accrington must have felt, seeing both their husbands and sons conscripted, most never to be seen again.



ARTHUR - ROB DIXON

I've been with WBDS for over 30 years and acted, directed, painted and am currently Chair. I've played Russians and Germans in previous productions, so it is good to be on the winning side in this war. My great uncle was in a Scottish regiment that went to the Somme as relief, two weeks after the infamous first day fiasco. His family were told by the laird of the estate that the boys had to go to war or get white feathers. He is buried in northern France. My character Arthur was hoping for the new Jerusalem. We are all still waiting. No sign of it yet.

CREW

Director - Barbara Seymour
Production Manager - Lynn Burges
Set Design - Barbara Seymour & Kathy Dowson
Set Build - Ritchie Sharpe, Annie Hayley,
Candice Gush & Charlie Wilcox
Lighting Design - Sav Dixon
Lighting Operator - Jeff Tullinn

Sound Design / Operator - Jem Woolley
Rehearsal Prompt - Sue Scrimshaw
Costume / Props - Charlie Wilcox
Stage Manager - Lynn Burges
FOH / Box Office Manager - Calum Sharp
FOH Staff - Society members
Programmes - Bertie Black



SARAH - DAWN COCHRANE

I've been with WBDS for 25 years, playing various roles on and off the stage. My last stage role being Di in Di and Viv and Rose. I've enjoyed understanding the part of Sarah and her motivations whilst working with a fabulous director, cast and crew. This play is such a rollercoaster of emotions and is still sadly so relevant to modern times. It is a privilege to be a part of bringing to life events that shaped how we live today.

BERTHA - EMILY MARTIN

I have been a member of WBDS for four years now, with this being my second year on the committee and as part of the Play Reading Group. This production has been a real challenge, taking me through a full range of emotions during the rehearsal process, but it has also been incredibly rewarding. Bertha is such an incredible and funny character who brings a very naive perspective into the play. I'm incredibly grateful to have shared this experience with such a wonderful cast and crew. With my fiancé currently serving in the Navy, the themes of feminism, friendship and the strength it takes to support one another have been especially moving and have given the production a very personal meaning for me.





RIVERS - BERTIE BLACK

Having joined WBDS a little over a year ago, this is my fourth production with the company; credits being the titular character in The Signalman, Robin in A Wedding Story, and William Gillette in The Game's Afoot. Outside of theatre, I am the frontman in a metal band, Jumper, and I also work as an actor with Murder 57 across the country. It has been a pleasure and a challenge to embody CSM Rivers, and this play has given me a chance to develop backstory and accent in a way I never have before. I hope you appreciate this production and join us in acknowledging the many lives affected by the horrors of war, both on the frontline and on closer shores.

SPECIAL THANKS

We would like to thank Marie Jackson and the Music Dept at the Becket School, for the loan of the trumpet.

May's fruit stall kindly provided by Lodge Farm Leisure, Gunthorpe. Campervan, motorhome and caravan servicing and repairs. National Caravan Council - Approved Workshop Scheme member. Insurance work, solar panels, motor movers, damp work and resealing on all types of leisure vehicles. Approved centre for AL-KO and BPW chassis, Alde, Thetford, Truma and Whale equipment, supply and filling of Safefill propane cylinders.

Find us at Lodge Farm, Lowdham Road, Gunthorpe, Notts NG14 7ES.
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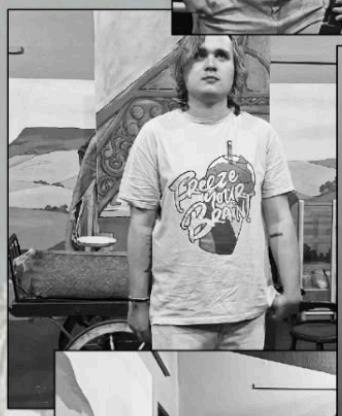
REHEARSAL PHOTOS









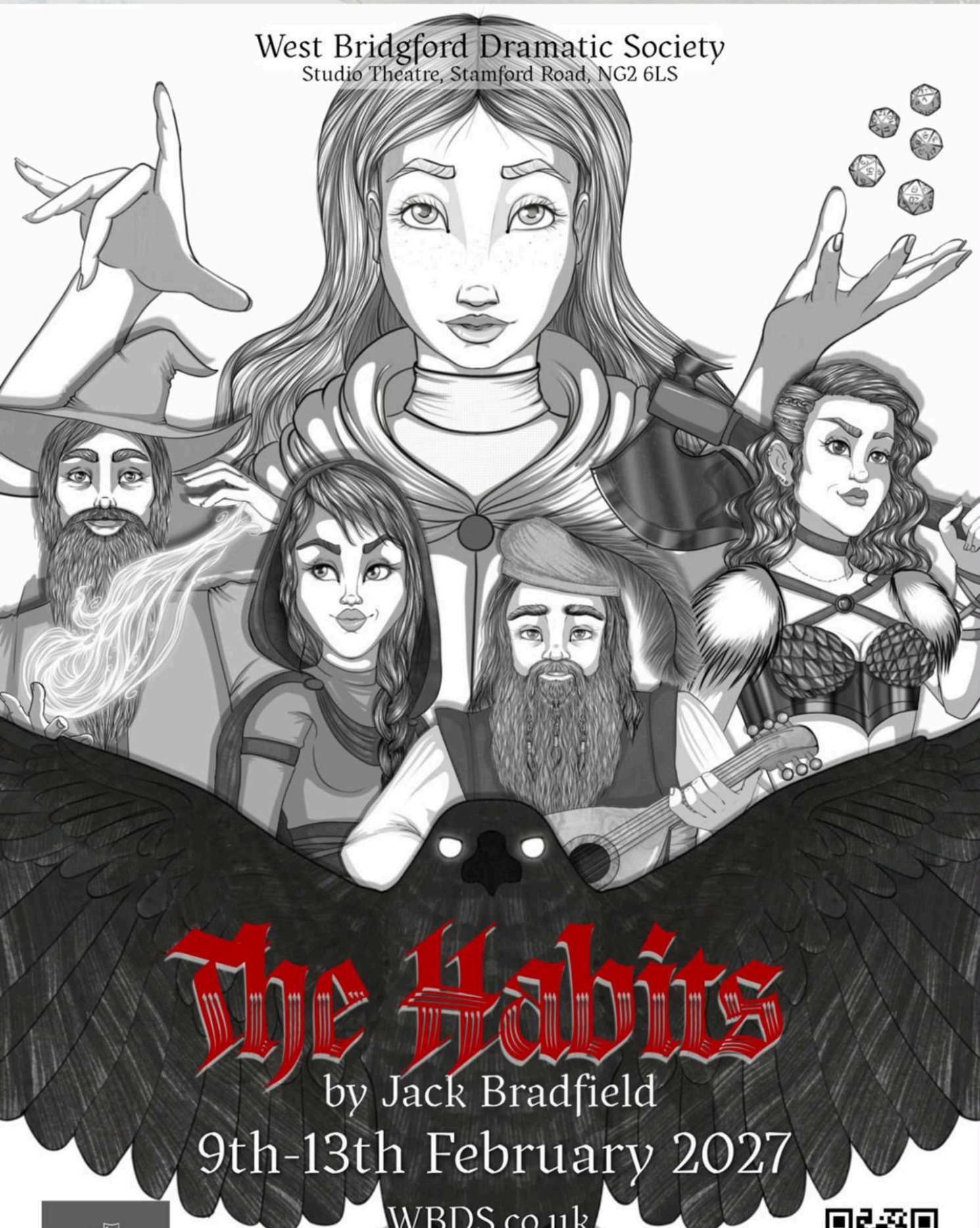







West Bridgford Dramatic Society

Studio Theatre, Stamford Road, NG2 6LS



The Habits

by Jack Bradfield

9th-13th February 2027

WBDS.co.uk

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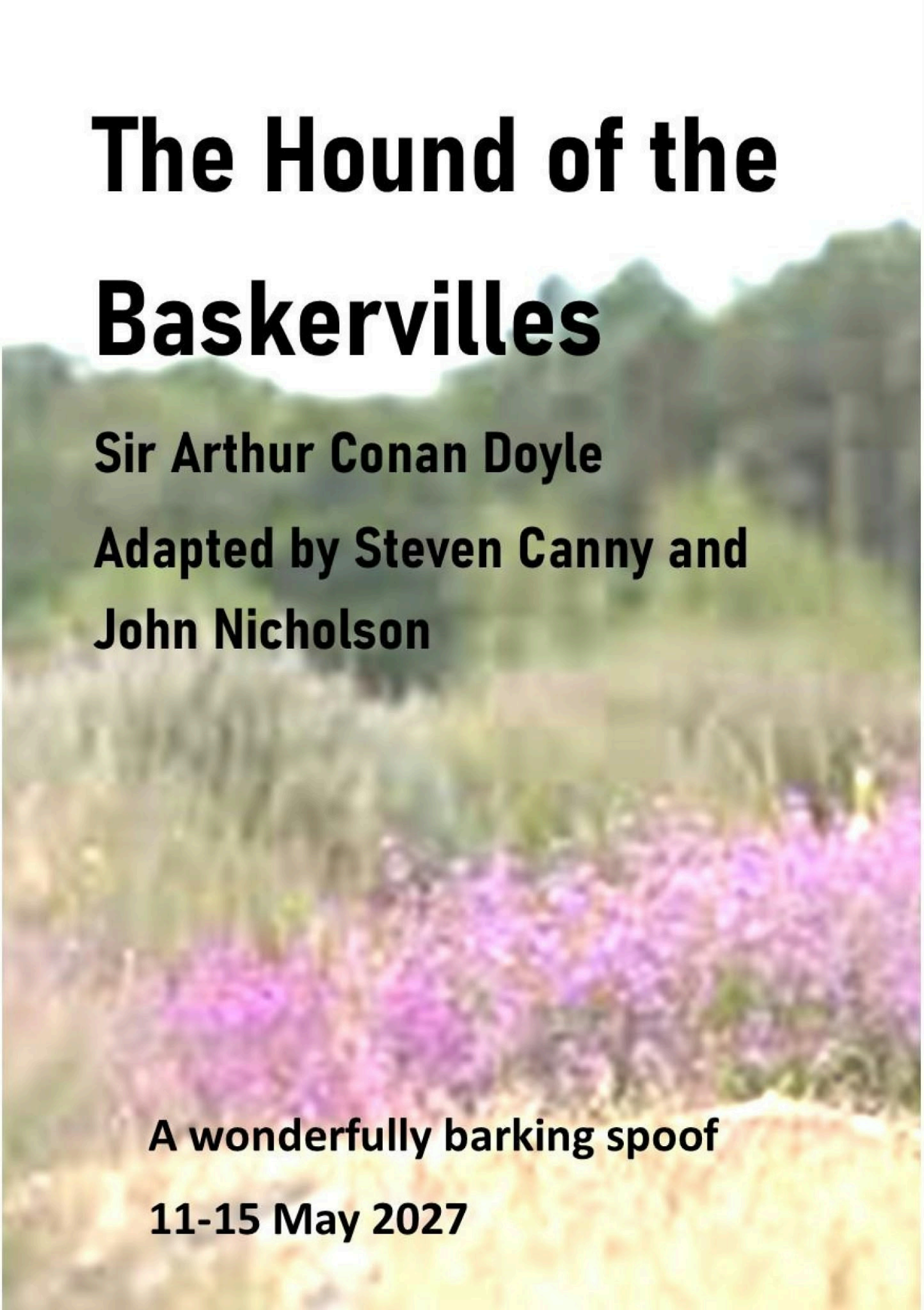
This amateur product of The Habits is presented by arrangement with Nick Hern Books

The Hound of the Baskervilles

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Adapted by Steven Canny and John Nicholson



A wonderfully barking spoof

11-15 May 2027



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The Studio Theatre, Stamford Road, NG2 6LS

This amateur production of 'The Accrington Pals' is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals Ltd. on behalf of Samuel French Ltd. www.concordtheatricals.co.uk