

The Good Old Days at Sevenoaks

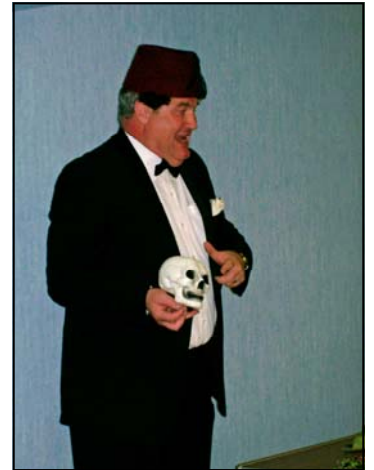
In a long and distinguished Masonic career, W. Bro. Stuart Robbins could never have guessed he would one day end up playing straight man to cack-handed, fez-wearing comedian "Tommy Cooper". But that is just what happened when the West Kent APMG turned up at a riotously funny evening, as Sevenoaks launched its part in the 2015 Festival for the Masonic Samaritan Fund, on May 30.

The APMG was enjoying a Saturday evening of mirth, music and magic at the centre's Old-Time Music Hall – The Good Old Days - when "Tommy", a.k.a. W. Bro. Douglas Sayers, struck. *Just like that!*

Stuart, playing his role as the straight man to the expressionless hilt, was told to hand over his handkerchief for one of "Tommy's" tricks. He implored; "Take good care of it." But, true to form, the trick went disastrously wrong. After placing the handkerchief over a burning candle, "Tommy" unfolded it with a flourish to reveal ... a big hole burned in the middle.

The audience, already fired with enthusiasm by everything from beautiful singing from "Vivacious Vocalist" Wendy Chown to a bawdy rendering of "If I Were Not On The Stage" by "Comical Choristers" The Tonge Troubadours, roared with laughter at the APMG's dilemma.

Poker-faced, "Tommy" dived into his pocket to replace the handkerchief – with one sporting an identical hole in it! *Just like that!*



Another highlight of the evening was "Marvellous Magician" - 90-year-old W. Bro. Fergus Anckorn's highly-skilled act.

But in all his years as a conjurer, and as a member of the elite Magic Circle, Fergus had never seen the trick demonstrated by Master of Ceremonies, W. Bro. Len Warne.

With one grand sweep of his arm, Len made all Fergus's props vanish ... on to the floor! The magician stared in disbelief.

The first person to take the stage was the show's genial producer, W. Bro. Mike Wheal, dressed in a striped blazer, obviously modelled on a giant bird cage. To cries of "get 'em off!" he promptly awarded himself the title of Best Dressed Man. The show went uphill after that.



The audience, who lustily joined in the opening and closing choruses, booed, hissed and cheered Low Drama by the WesterHAM Players, and applauded spirited recitations by "Magnificent Monologist" Robert Pierson.

During the evening, a DVD of the Provincial Grand Master, Right Worshipful Brother Jonathan Winpenny, was played. The PGM officially launched the Festival and announced a preliminary target of £2,250,000. W. Bro. Stuart Robbins proposed a toast to the Masonic Samaritan Fund. MSF representative Colin Kennedy, who was enjoying the music hall with his wife, Marie, responded to the APMG.

The music hall was still roaring ahead when other centres had packed up and gone home. Luckily, the audience heeded warnings on the programme, which said:

"The Management will eject any person causing a disturbance at the bar" and "The Constabulary are on standby and will be summoned if required".

Everyone went home feeling royally entertained, and with over £500 being raised by the event, it was a truly great start to the Festival for Sevenoaks.



The Tonge Troubadours



Wendy Chown



The WesterHAM Players