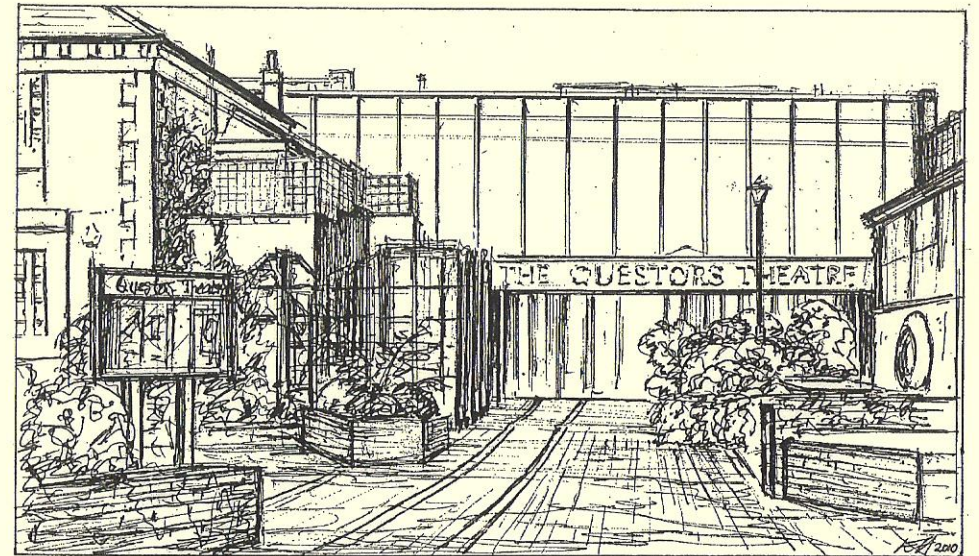




Questors, Ealing's Theatre



## **A LITTLE PATCH OF GROUND**

by Andrew Whelan

**The Studio**

**5 – 14 May 2011**

# Qafé

Pop in for lunch or an afternoon snack – serving specialist teas and coffees, hot chocolate and soft drinks, with a selection of sandwiches cut to order.

Now open seven days a week.

Tuesday to Friday: 10:30 am – 5:00 pm

Saturday: 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

Sunday: 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm

For Playhouse productions:

Hot meal menu up to 6:45 pm followed by drinks, ice creams and snacks through the first interval.

# The Grapevine Bar

The Grapevine is our friendly club bar open to Members and Friends of The Questors Theatre and their guests, as well as audience members on show nights.

The club is open seven nights a week and Sunday lunchtimes and is managed and staffed entirely by volunteers.

We are the proud holders of a Cask Marque award for the quality of our real ales, we appear in the 2011 edition of The Good Beer Guide and we are 2011 CAMRA West Middlesex Club of the Year. A choice of at least three real ales is usually available, including Fuller's London Pride. We also provide a range of draught lagers and ciders, as well as wines and spirits – all at very reasonable prices.

Opening Hours:

7:00 pm – 11:00 pm (10:30 pm close on Sundays)

Sunday lunchtime: midday – 2:30 pm

**Spring Mini Beer Festival – Thursday 2 to Saturday 4 June**

See [questors.org.uk/grapevine](http://questors.org.uk/grapevine) for more details

**Neither the Qafé nor the Grapevine  
are able to accept credit or debit cards.**

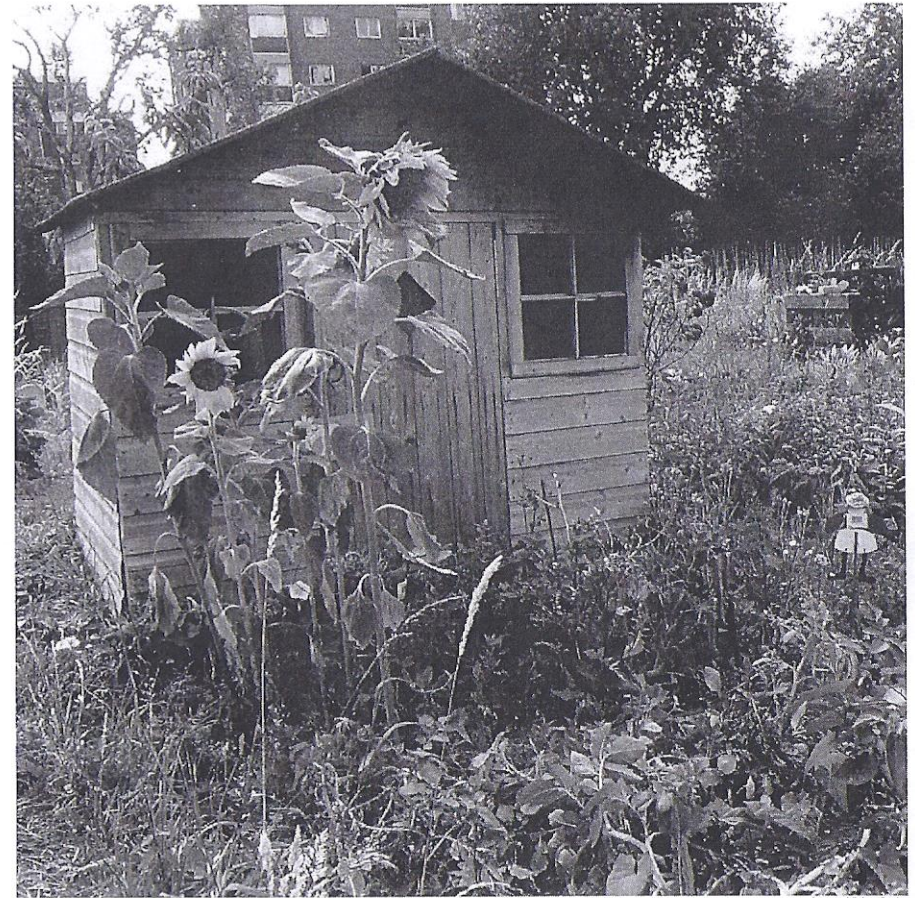


Image: Vivien Carter

# A LITTLE PATCH OF GROUND

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5 – 14 May 2011

# A Little Patch of Ground

## Notes from the Director, John Davey

My own allotment career has not been distinguished: I owned one briefly, but visited it rarely, and I've occasionally worked on other people's. But it doesn't take much to see the allure of the allotment, its elemental nature, nor to be aware of the fascination of allotment culture and its variety. I don't know that there are many plays about allotments – I've never before seen one which has allotments as its major theme and setting – but I'm deeply grateful to Andrew Whelan for having created this one, and to the PlayBack team for their inspiration in coming up with this topic. For a failed allotmenteer like myself, it's been a delight to watch the growth in rehearsal. I hope you enjoy the crop.

## Notes from the Author, Andrew Whelan

Writing a piece like this, full of stories plucked from other people, amusing anecdotes and tragic vignettes, is a bit like tending an allotment. You have many varieties to choose from at the start, you choose your seeds. You do not necessarily have control over all the elements but you hope you picked the right kernels. So you plant them, tend them, trim them when necessary and hope they grow at a decent pace, flourish in the company of all the other shoots and offshoots, and are ultimately tasty, or at the least... palatable.

I wanted a family at the centre of the play because to me that is a big part of what allotments are about. The plots where I go are full of references to family. Either the whole family goes to grow, or the parents go and the children visit, or the plot is handed down from father to son, mother to daughter or, and most tenuously, a member goes there to escape from the rest of the family. Even the interaction between plot-owners' plots seems to me to be family based. There are bickering arguments, petty grievances, jealousy, kindness, resentment, friendship, generosity and love. I think most people would recognise these as part of everyday family life.

There are elements in the Judd family of people I know. The wonderful chap who got me involved in allotments in the first place, who sadly died a couple of years ago, had elements of Jim Judd about his personality. I knew him from my local and he was wicked and funny and famously, marvellously comically grumpy and we miss him. Once, quite soon after I'd just got involved, he suddenly stopped working and left me there, alone digging while he went to the local pub; as he said, "It's my knees. I can't do any more. I'm off to the pub, I'll see you in an hour or so." I stood there thinking, "What have I let myself in for?" I didn't know anything about allotments and there I was, standing ankle deep in mud with an old spade on my own. I looked around and there was no one about except, on a nearby plot, a scarecrow made out of a showroom dummy. It was a little spooky. Gradually, people came and went on surrounding plots, doing numerous tasks while I kept digging. Then I was alone again. This is an atmosphere I wanted to get into the play.

I wanted to get the sense that this piece of ground is ancient, and that this idea, growing food, plants, anything, trying to tend a small piece of earth, is something we

do instinctively, which I think it is. It's in our genes. Take away the trendiness that seems to be attached to allotments at the moment, take away the committees, the parties, the eccentric sheds and the padlocked gates and you just have a bunch of people trying to grow food on land they rent. That simple concept goes back a very long way.

The title came from John Davey, the Director, at an early meeting. I had toyed with a great many ideas, some of which were good, some of which were bad and at least one of which had just been taken by the BBC (*Losing the Plot*). There is a lot of zeitgeist about allotments right now and every other television company seems to be making a plot-based sitcom or documentary. Then the quote cropped up (no pun intended but you just can't avoid them; we are so deeply linked to growing things). It is spoken by one of Fortinbras' soldiers, a Captain, towards the end of *Hamlet*.

Captain: *We go to gain a little patch of ground  
That hath in it no profit but the name.  
To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it;  
Nor will it yield to Norway or the Pole  
A ranker rate, should it be sold in fee.*

Hamlet: *Why, then the Polack never will defend it.*

Captain: *Yes, it is already garrison'd.*

Not worth much then, and yet someone is prepared to defend it. It seemed appropriate, a little patch of unprofitable land, worth no more than the name, no more than the fact you are attached to it, worth fighting for despite its size, and worth holding on to for more reasons than just the growing. I think that's what Evie is trying to get at in the play. I think the plot is linked to identity and the fact that sometimes we are defined by small things, those treasured possessions, which have no value except to ourselves. A shed, a childhood toy, a battered photograph, an old school report or even a little patch of ground. Although, the way people are fighting for allotments at the moment, I am not sure.

However, postulating aside, it struck a chord with me and I have to thank John very much for that.

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## Next Questors Productions

**TITUS ANDRONICUS**  
by William Shakespeare  
27 May – 4 June 2011  
The Studio

Shakespeare's earliest and bloodiest tragedy, depicting the cycle of revenge between Roman general Titus and Tamora, Queen of the Goths.

**RENT**  
by Jonathan Larson  
11 – 18 June 2011  
The Playhouse

Exuberant East Village rock version of Puccini's *La Bohème* with a stirring and life-affirming score which captures the heart and spirit of a generation.

# A LITTLE PATCH OF GROUND

by Andrew Whelan

*World Premiere of this production at The Questors Theatre: 5 May 2011*

## CAST

in order of appearance

Jim Judd      **Andrew Hill**  
Evie Judd      **Anne Neville**

Their children:

David      **Anthony Curran**  
Suzy      **Hannah Whiteoak**  
Heather      **Jananne Rahman**

Suzy's children:

Luke      **Sean Hynes**  
Holly      **Emily Dell**

Their friend:

Kazia      **Clare Cooper**

All other parts played by members of the cast.

The play is set on the Judd's allotment in October.

The performance lasts approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes with no interval.

Please turn off all mobile phones, pagers and watch alarms.  
The use of cameras, video cameras and recording equipment is strictly prohibited.  
Thank you.

## PRODUCTION

Director	<b>John Davey</b>
Musical Director	<b>Benjamin Cox</b>
Set Designer	<b>Elaine Hagan</b>
Costume Designer	<b>Anne Gilmour</b>
Lighting Designer / Operator	<b>Francois Langton</b>
Sound Designer	<b>Colin Horne</b>
Stage Managers	<b>Jane Arnold-Forster, Tina Harris</b>
Deputy Stage Manager	<b>Penny Seyfert</b>
Assistant Stage Manager	<b>Liz Cooper</b>
Properties	<b>Pip Egan</b>
Prompter	<b>Bridgett Strevens</b>
Accompanist (7 & 8 May)	<b>William Morris</b>
Construction Manager	<b>Mike Hagan</b>
Constructor	<b>John MacCarrick</b>
Wardrobe Assistants	<b>Annie Youshie</b>
PlayBack Co-ordinators	<b>Jane Dewey, Christine Garland, Anne Gilmour</b>
Photographer	<b>Peter Collins</b>
Thanks to	<b>Bron Blake, Steve Cowan, Morrisons (Brentford), Osterley Garden Centre</b>

## Biographies

### Jane Arnold-Forster – Stage Manager

Jane has been Stage Managing at The Questors since 2006, when she stage managed *The Weir*. Her most recent productions include *Festen*, *Two*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Broken Glass* and *Abigail's Party*.

### Clare Cooper – Kazia

This is Clare's third production for The Questors after *Trojan Women* (chorus) and *Further Than the Furthest Thing* (Mill). She also appears with other West London companies especially Teddington Theatre Club, where productions have included *Revolutionary Witness* (Theroigne), *Mary Stuart* (Elizabeth I) and *A Chorus of Disapproval* (Hannah). She trained at Guildford School of Acting.

### Benjamin Cox – Musical Director

Ben recently graduated from Cambridge University. Ben specialises in music composition, and has studied under Giles Swayne and Graham Ross. His most recent achievement was the premiere of his new opera *Sursum Corda*, which was performed under his direction in 2010. Ben teaches piano and composition privately, and is now Music Director of London a cappella group The Ruby Dolls. He has thoroughly enjoyed working with the cast and crew of *Beauty and the Beast*, *Too Fast* and *A Little Patch of Ground* at The Questors and looks forward to future productions of such high calibre.

### Anthony Curran – David

Anthony Curran has been an acting member since 1992 and is a graduate of Student Group 47. He has acted in parts as diverse as Mole in *The Wind in The Willows* and Estragon in *Waiting For Godot*. He recently played Hobson in *Hobson's Choice*.

### John Davey – Director

A member since 1971, he has directed and acted in numerous plays, but has had an enforced break from directing since 2004 when he directed *Summerfolk*. Artistic Director for five years and Chair for eight, he also wrote and directed *The Glass Menage a Trois* which won the last World Coarse Acting Championships.

### Emily Dell – Holly

Emily Dell received a BA Hons degree in Performing Arts in 2008 and since then has invested her time in joining a comedy sketch group and becoming a London tour guide. She has previously performed at The Questors and played Susannah in *Bedroom Farce* and is very excited to be involved in this quirky and homely production of *A Little Patch of Ground*.

### Sean Hynes – Luke

Sean has acted for over 12 years and has been part of the award-winning theatre company The Essex Group. Being a keen participator in senior school productions, and after finishing Drama and English at A level, Sean is currently studying drama in Kingston, for his first of a three-year BA Hons course at university.

### Andrew Hill – Jim Judd

Andrew is an experienced actor who has appeared in theatres up and down the country as well as abroad. This is his fourth production for The Questors after *Insignificance*, *The Homecoming* and *Hobson's Choice*. By co-incidence, Andrew appeared in a play twenty-five years ago with the author of *A Little Patch of Ground*. They hadn't met in all that time.

### Anne Neville – Evie Judd

Anne has acted and directed at The Questors for nearly thirty years. Productions include *A Winter's Tale*, *Translations*, *A Servant to Two Masters*, *The Weir*, *She Stoops to Conquer* and *Faith Healer*. Parts include Miss Havisham, Miss Shepherd in *The Lady in The Van*, Madam Ranyevskaya in *The Cherry Orchard*, Winnie in *Happy Days*, Rima in *Dolly West's Kitchen* and Mephistopheles in *Doctor Faustus*.

### Jananne Rahman – Heather

Jananne has appeared in numerous Questors productions since 2003. Roles have included Tilda Price / Henrietta Petowker in *Nicholas Nickleby*, Kathy in *Company*, Mrs Joe in *Great Expectations*, Helene in *Festen*, Masha in *The Seagull* and Beverly in *Abigail's Party*. Her most recent appearances were in October 2010 as Rosie in *Humble Boy* and in December 2010 reading Christmas ghost stories.

### Hannah Whiteoak – Suzy

Hannah began her love of life at The Questors as part of Student Group 60. Her most recent roles have included Ophelia in the exciting *Hamlet Unseen*, Davina in *Otherwise Engaged* and Angellica Bianca in Aphra Behn's *The Rover* which toured to the stunning Minack Theatre in Cornwall and The Lindhart Festival, Slovenia. This is Hannah's first time singing on stage at The Questors. Most recently she has also enjoyed getting involved back stage in wardrobe, fixing, sewing, finding and making bits and pieces. An all round kinda girl!

## Around The Borders

An exciting programme of 40 minute Late Nighters that will follow performances of *A Little Patch of Ground*.

**7 May: *Mixed Veg*** – Hilarious comedy featuring Questors own sketch group *Errors Of Comedy* and guest improv company *Marbles*. An alternative and irreverent look at the world of horticulture. You'll never look a marrow in the eye again!

**11 May: *Gardeners' Questor Time*** – Light-hearted horticultural gossip and advice. The Panel will include TV's *Saturday Kitchen* chef, author and allotmenteer Paul Merrett answering questions on your gardening and cooking problems.

**13 & 14 May: *The Plot Thickens*** – A Murder Mystery from the wickedly comic pen of Phillip Sheahan and featuring some Questors star actors. Skulduggery amongst the sprouts ... and a hilarious chance to pit your wits against an allotment assassin.

All events start at 9:30 pm in The Studio

## PlayBack and the Allotments Project

For over twenty years, PlayBack (The Questors reminiscence theatre group) has been collecting memories from local people and turning them into plays and roadshows. These have been performed at the theatre and, at the invitation of community groups, around the West London area.

Our work means that we have been able to bring to life emotions and experiences from many years ago and share them with today's audiences. It has been rewarding to find that PlayBack's work resonates with – and entertains – people of all ages, from school children to those who remember the events first hand.

In 2010, the team started a new project, and this time we chose a subject as relevant today as it was 60 or 70 years ago: allotments. Ealing and its neighbouring boroughs are particularly rich in allotment sites, and the PlayBack team spent an enjoyable six months last year meeting and interviewing allotmenters. The collected interview transcripts formed the raw material for our play – and later in the year, a roadshow will be created from it for ongoing performance to local community groups.

PlayBack has regularly worked in partnership with other local organisations and benefited from their support for our activities away from the theatre in Mattock Lane. For our current project, we were particularly pleased to be awarded a grant from The Ealing & Brentford Consolidated Charity to cover our development and community tour costs. We not only share similar community aims and local focus as the EBCC, but the charity owns two allotment sites in the area – thus making it a most suitable partner. The EBCC funding also enabled us to develop how we work artistically within The Questors, and for the first time we have commissioned the play script from a professional playwright, Andrew Whelan.

Following the play's run at The Questors, there will be a short tour to other community venues. There are also a number of allotment-themed events (grouped under the title of *Around The Borders*) taking place at the theatre in conjunction with *A Little Patch of Ground*; details are given elsewhere in this programme. Do come and join us for these if you can – and we hope you enjoy the play.

Special thanks to  
**The Ealing & Brentford Consolidated Charity**  
for their grant support for PlayBack's allotment  
community project, and the creation and performance of  
*A Little Patch of Ground*

### TALKBACK – Tuesday 10 May

Come and meet the Author, Director, Cast and Crew for an informal discussion in The Studio as soon as possible after the Tuesday performance.

## Join Us

If you enjoy theatre, why not join us and benefit from membership:

- ✓ Half price personal tickets for Questors productions\*
- ✓ Discounted Guest tickets when you bring friends to Questors productions\*
- ✓ Children's FREE tickets<sup>†</sup>
- ✓ Opportunities to be actively involved in our productions
- ✓ Allowed to audition to join our company of actors
- ✓ Exclusive or discounted training courses
- ✓ The full-colour *Questors Live* magazine three times a year
- ✓ The monthly *QNews* members' newsletter
- ✓ Monthly programme card
- ✓ Membership of The Grapevine Club
- ✓ Access to iQ – the members-only website <http://members.questors.org.uk>
- ✓ Voting rights in the company

\*Reduced prices exclude certain events. <sup>†</sup>Under 18 only, maximum four per event. Must be collected at the performance and accompanied by an adult member.

**Introductory offer** – as a welcome for first time members, *either* try us out for six months at half price, *or* get your first 15 months' membership for the price of 12.

## Getting the most from your membership

We have a wide range of opportunities for you to become actively involved front-of-house or backstage. Volunteer help is always needed for selling programmes or stewarding, and training is provided if you'd like to work in Box Office with our computerized system. To meet members in a social setting, volunteer to help behind the Grapevine bar. Backstage staff including stage managers, prop makers, set builders, sound and light designers and operators, painters, wardrobe and costume and set designers are always welcomed; whatever your skills, we'll find a place for you. We also have courses for those wishing to direct.

The Questors has a high standard of acting and, to maintain this, everyone wanting to act must first take an audition. These are held every month – call the Theatre Office for details of forthcoming auditions.

## Questors Youth Theatre – QYT

Our Youth Theatre, QYT, runs weekly drama classes for all ages from 6 to 16. Younger groups meet on Saturday mornings and older ages at weekday teatime. There's often a waiting list for membership, so put your name down now! Details are online at [questors.org.uk/qyt](http://questors.org.uk/qyt).

Cover Image: Elaine Hagan

Programme: Nigel Bamford &  
John MacCarrick

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