

# Our BLT

A Celebration

## Patrick Neylan



**How long have you been involved with BLT?**

**How did you find out about BLT in the first place?**

I'd heard the name but always confused it with the Labour Club at the south end of town, which is a very small building and so might have qualified as a "little theatre" if there had been any drama there beyond arguments over the vexed question of whether Hugo Chavez was a genuine hero of the working class and other matters of concern to workers in Bromley on minimum wage.

**What do you remember about your first visit?**

I eventually stumbled across the actual theatre in September 2007 when I ambled into Bromley after a visit to my late brother who lived in Sundridge Park. "Ah, so this is BLT," I thought, "And they've got auditions next week." As it happens, I'd just flounced out of a play at Chelsfield Players after auditioning for *A Chorus Of Disappointment* and being offered a minor role rather than either of the leads. Since I was the only man who'd auditioned, I felt like I'd finished third in a two-horse race (having since seen the play twice since then, I'm grateful to the director for sparing me).

The following Sunday I walked into the bar 30 seconds early (my traditional timekeeping) and heard the words every chap likes to hear: "Oh good, a man." It would make for a better story if nobody else had auditioned because finishing first in a one-horse race makes a nice parallel, so let's pretend that's what happened. Anyway, I inveigled myself into the January 2008 production of *Noises Off* and BLT hasn't managed to get rid of me since.

**What kind of activities are you involved in or have been involved in at BLT?**

When my acting "skills" aren't required, which is often, I can be found behind the bar sneering at plebs who drink beer out of cans and bottles or drink Carlsberg out of anything. I once tried running the coffee bar and discovered that the BLT audience doesn't drink coffee or tea but is a slave to ice cream. Bear in mind this was a December show and I had rows of hot drinks arranged on the bar like Wellington's squares at Waterloo, and when the audience

descended like the charge of Marshall Ney's cuirassiers I was outflanked by demands for choc-ices and mint-flavoured Magnums. Never again.

At other times I can be unseen backstage operating lights, because even that isn't beyond my meagre skills. I have also been known to reorganise the bookshelf in the hope that some of you illiterate scum will pop a ten-bob coin in the box to enjoy the dubious pleasures of Dan Brown. We really need to get rid of that stuff.

**Have you had any highlights during your time with BLT that you would like to share?**

After *Lion In Winter*, a lady approached me in the bar and asked, "How dangerous was that thing you did with the sword [swinging it at Dan's head and Alfie's undercarriage]?" Me: "As dangerous as it looked." Her: "What did you use for a sword?" Me: "A sword."

**What are you missing most about BLT at the moment – if anything?**

The bar, if only so I can continue my unspoken feud with Peter Yolland over how much Coke we need to keep there. I'll also miss the woman who asked for a Pepsi and, having been told we only had Coke, asked for a grapefruit juice and tonic as if that were the closest equivalent. It reminds me of the time in Sainsbury's when I found a box of eggs abandoned on the stationery shelf, as someone had thought, "Oh look, they've got multi-coloured Post-It notes. I'll not be needing these eggs then."

**What are your hopes for BLT in the future?**

That the roof stops leaking, the toilet seat stops slipping and the men learn either accuracy or mopping (you know who you are).

**Is there anything else you would like to share?**

Nah.