

Journey's End

Audition Pack

Key Dates

Audition Dates:

- **Tuesday 8th May** – 6:00 – 10:00pm (Everyman Clubroom)
- **Saturday 12th May** – 10.30am – 5.00pm
- **Sunday 13th May** – 10:00am – 3.00pm

Recalls (if required):

- **Friday 18th May** – 6:00 – 10:00pm (Everyman Clubroom)
- **Saturday 19th May** – 10:00am – 1:00pm (Everyman Clubroom)

Actors who are successfully cast need to understand that they **MUST** be available for all the following key dates

- **Technical Rehearsal:** Sunday 4th November (cast need to be available all day)
- **Dress Rehearsal:** Monday 5th November (evening)
- **Performance Dates:** Tuesday 6th – Saturday 10th November; Evening Performances at 7.30pm, Saturday matinee at 2.30pm

Rehearsal Nights

Rehearsals will begin w/c Monday 3rd September.

Exact rehearsal nights will be confirmed nearer the time but are quite likely to be Mondays, Wednesdays or Thursdays and Sundays. Not all cast will be required for every rehearsal.

JOURNEY'S END

The action takes place over four days from Monday March 18th 1918 to Thursday March 21st 1918 in the trenches at St Quentin, Picardy, France. An Infantry Company commanded by Captain Stanhope come back into the front line just as a massive German offensive is anticipated. Shortly after they arrive back they are joined by Second Lieutenant Raleigh. He left school the previous summer and has just arrived in France for his first posting. He was in school with Stanhope and has pulled strings to be posted to his Company. The play concludes with the German Spring offensive of 1918 – the most ferocious of the Great War – Journey's End

Auditions

One unusual element of the auditions is that they will be “doubled” with the auditions for Blackadder Goes Forth. Those auditioning will be welcome to audition for both shows – and it is anticipated that both directors will sit in on the auditions.

I will ask those auditioning to read sections of dialogue from the play. I do not expect anyone to learn anything. However reading the character notes should assist – and familiarising yourself with the play may also assist you. By all means watch the film – but that is a different artistic medium. However the trench scenes are essentially from the play.

- I will not ask you to prepare anything specific in advance. If you come with a piece that you would like to read – that you have prepared in advance – there will be someone present in the room to read in the dialogue for the other characters in the scene.
- If you have not specifically chosen something in advance that I will give you a passage which will then be read in the same way

This play is brutal realism. Indeed in 1928 it was thought that the realism was so stark that nobody would want to come and see it as it would bring home – or remind themselves – of the brutal reality of trench warfare. The action depicted is taken straight from history – the German Spring Offensive of March 1918 – in the vicinity of St Quentin in Picardy. The bombardment was the most ferocious of the war.

It might assist if you reflect on this observation made to a group of drama students by the late Hollywood actress Jean Arthur.

“I wish people knew how to be people as well as that tree knows how to be a tree.”

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

1. Dennis Stanhope (22) – Father, vicar in India – there with mother till retired.

Dennis spent time staying with Dr Raleigh and his family from the age of 11 until his parents returned from India when he was 14. When he first met the Raleigh's, Jimmy Raleigh was 8 and his sister Margaret (Madge) was 10. At 13 he moved from his Prep School to his Public School, Barford. He had three close friends in his early years there but was known to be moody and have a quick temper – so was not hugely popular. Until his parents returned from India he had been very friendly with Jimmy when visiting, but after they came back – at the end of his first year at Barford – he no longer spent the school holidays with the Raleigh's. When Jimmy came to Barford Dennis was in the Lower Sixth and was a House Prefect. The gulf of three years in their ages was, by then, a gulf. In his final year (1913 to 1914) he was a School Prefect – and on one occasion had to cane Jimmy. After he had left school in July 1914 he was invited to spend a couple of weeks with the Raleigh's, before going to Sandhurst. He was there on August 4th 1914 when World War 1 started. Due to the outbreak of the war his Sandhurst training was curtailed – and he was posted to the front as 2nd Lieutenant Stanhope in June 1915.

In December 1915, whilst on leave in London, Dennis spent a few hours with Madge and they realised they loved each other as they parted at the station.

In June 1917 – having won the MC (Military Cross) at the Battle of Vimy Ridge for “conspicuous gallantry” Dennis was on leave again. He couldn't meet up with Madge as she was by now serving as a nurse in France, but in a different sector to his. He goes to visit his old school, Barford, where Jimmy is now in his final term. All Jimmy (keen to enlist and get to France before it's all over”) – and indeed his old housemaster – wants to talk about is his MC and the war. Deeply disillusioned and scarred by it all it is the very last thing that he wants to talk about. He knows that many of his contemporaries have been killed. He is far keener to consume the housemaster's scotch than he is to talk about life in France.

After that leave Dennis declined his next leave back to England. He found it easier to stay in France – rather than have to face the pain of saying

goodbyes after yet another all too short leave. Madge had returned to England having had a minor breakdown in France so their only communication was by letter. For Madge the change in Dennis did not go unnoticed – evident in the tone of his letters. He keeps her photograph in his wallet.

He is now Commanding Officer of C Company. He drinks heavily to deaden his nerves in order to cope with the terrors of war. He throws himself into his duties and hardly sleeps. He has fierce temper at times but he is liked and respected by his men.

By March 2018 Stanhope is 22. That needs to be believable. Despite his age – he is a hardened veteran by March 2018. However he suffers the terrors as much as anyone else – but has found his own medicine to cope with it. Whisky. When the play was premiered in 1928 Stanhope was played by Laurence Olivier – aged 21. The actor must find the way to be a convincing hardened veteran – aged just 22.

2. Raleigh (19) – father a widowed doctor

Jimmy Raleigh left Barford July 1917, three years after his hero Dennis. After the summer holidays he volunteered – and after he had undertaken basic training he was sent to France in March 1918 – as a 2nd Lieutenant. At the end of February he had his final home leave before being posted to France. He stayed with at his father's house during his leave, where Madge was also now staying. She was working in the kitchens of the hospital in Bournemouth as she slowly recovered from her breakdown, anticipating that in due course she would be able to return to France.

A couple of weeks later Jimmy received his posting to France. He sends his father a telegram his father in the hope that he and Madge can say their goodbyes at the station, but neither is able to get there in time. By this time he is excited – he does see it as an adventure – but he knows what the dangers are. However he is 19. He can't believe anything will happen to him. At 19 you are immortal – and heroism beckons. He just hopes he doesn't "funk it" – as others have done.

When he gets to France the ship lands at Le Havre. Knowing that his uncle – General Raleigh – is based there he visits him and asks to be posted to Dennis' battalion. Though somewhat disapproving of the request – his uncle obliges.

Jimmy is a fresh faced teenager – who if anything looks younger than his chronological age. Consequently the part could be played by an actor of 16 or 17 – or by a slightly older actor provided he looks younger than he is.

3. Osborne (40 – 45)

Lieutenant Osborne is Stanhope's second in command and is known to all as "Uncle". He was a schoolmaster who volunteered – out of a sense of patriotic duty. He is married with two children – and could easily have avoided being drafted. He is Stanhope's rock. The role of wise father figure sits comfortably on his shoulders. He is everyone's mentor.

4. Trotter (30 – 40)

A rough diamond Second Lieutenant. Third in line of command. He volunteered and was later promoted from the ranks. Spends a lot of time eating – and it is starting to show.

5. Hibbert (18 – 21)

A young 2nd Lieutenant. He claims to be suffering harshly from neuralgia, but Stanhope believes he is just feigning in order to leave the front lines and go back home. Either he is on the edge of being broken by the terrors of trench warfare – or he wants to escape and the lurking terror felt by all that they are all about to die. Stanhope considers Hibbert to be a coward and a malingerer – and is determined that if the rest of the Company have to face the coming onslaught – then so will Hibbert.

6. Mason (35 – 45)

An enlisted private soldier whose role is of cook and servant – but when the Germans come over he will be putting aside his pots and pans and lining up with his gun.

7. Company Sargent Major (35 – 45)

A professional soldier. As Sergeant-Major, he is in charge of the enlisted men of C Company and sometimes relieves the officers on duty watch details.

8. Hardy (25 – 30)

A Captain from another Company. Older than Stanhope. He thinks it may be best if Stanhope is replaced as CO, reasoning against his young age, his drinking, his temperament, and also because he believes Stanhope is beginning to crack from his long service on the front.

9. The Colonel (50 – 60)

A professional career officer. He is Stanhope's superior as the Commanding Officer of – presumably – the battalion or regiment. He demonstrates that he is not callous to the plight of the men when he suggests to the Brigadier that the planned raiding operation be conducted at, or nearer to, dark as opposed to daylight (a suggestion that the Brigadier and the rest of the top brass refuse).

10. A German soldier (18 – 20)

A captured prisoner. Young and terrified
May double with Lance Corporal Broughton

BOOKING AN AUDITION

YOU CAN BOOK AN AUDITION FROM APRIL 1st NOT BEFORE!

To book an audition slot, please contact amabourke@gmail.com

If you have any questions about the audition pieces or characters, please contact:

Peter Harding-Roberts – 07813 798804

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