

## SPOTLIGHT ON:

### GILLIAN JARVIS



Anyone who meets Gillian cannot fail to be impressed with the boundless energy and passion she brings to any role she undertakes, whether on or off stage. Moving to the Reigate area 42 years ago as the mother of two young children, husband Mike suggested the need for Gillian to have a hobby outside the

home. What a hobby ESOS has turned out to be!

Jenny Toye suggested ESOS as a good place to use Gillian's as yet untried talents and her first performance was in the 1966 production of *South Pacific* in which she was entrusted with the all important line, 'Comin' to the beach Nellie?' She loved being involved and performed in every show except one until 1984, playing some of the great roles - Calamity Jane, Eliza Doolittle and Annie Oakley. Lady Thiang in *The King and I* was one of her favourites, despite the fact that her two boys failed to become Siamese children as they were rejected for fighting at the auditions! At the same time Gillian was doing a considerable amount of solo Oratorio work with local choirs, and had the thrill of singing the named part in Britten's *Rape of Lucretia* in London. She also played many roles and did lots of chorus work with The Opera Club of Reigate and Redhill.

In 1984 when ESOS were struggling to find a Director, Gillian asked the Committee to give her a chance to direct, offering her experience as a teacher putting on school productions as proof of competence and to her delight and later terror they gave her the job! She describes the relief of seeing the final result and hearing waves of laughter from a packed audience at the Dorking Hall as like 'being reborn'. That was the first of over 50 productions, mostly for ESOS and several for The Opera Club. Six musicals were presented in the open air at Polesden Lacey where ESOS performed for the National Trust to huge audiences, *The Sound of Music*, *Gliver!* and *Fiddler on the Roof* being particular favourites.

A production of *Honk!* with youngsters from 6 to 18 was particularly rewarding including designing and painting a huge set. One of the joys of directing, Gillian has often said, is watching young people - or people of any age - blossom and grow in self-confidence as they perform and their talents develop. ESOS sees youth involvement as vital for the future of the Society.

She also spent several years on the Committee with an assortment of responsibilities and says that her many years with ESOS have added immeasurably to what has been a fulfilled and fortunate life.

Away from ESOS, Gillian has, for 27 years, been organising the entertainment for the fortnightly meetings of the Bob Chudley Club for the Blind, and says she

is very grateful for the way that all the talented people she has worked with have generously given of their time and talents to help her out there.

Her many friends will miss Gillian and Mike if, as planned and hoped for, the move to York to be nearer family becomes a reality.