

## British Final Festival History page – 2012

Dates	Venue	Adjudicator
6-7 July 2012	Torch Theatre, Milford Haven	Ian Sarginson GoDA

Finalists	Play	Playwright	Company	Director
Wales	Biscuits	Graham J. Evans	Blackwood Little Theatre	Neil Maidman
Northern Ireland	The Droitwich Discovery	Nick Warburton	The Clarence Players	
Scotland	In the Blinking of an Eye	Jeremy Hylton Davies	Kirkton Players	
England	The Tempest		Total Arts Community Theatre	

Awards	Play	Recipient
Howard de Walden Trophy	In the Blinking of an Eye	Kirkton Players
Geoffrey Whitworth Playwriting Competition	Conkers	Barbara Crass

Notes on the festival	
Date added	13/05/2016
By whom	Leon Searle

**Notes****Wonderful, wonderful Milford Haven..., first appeared in DAW Newsletter July 2012**

Heading west along the M4 through the driving rain and toward even darker and more foreboding skies, I didn't hold out too much hope for the visitors to Pembrokeshire who were heading for the British Final of One Act Plays. The usually beautiful Pembrokeshire was not looking its best and our out-of-towners would surely be leaving with the wrong impression of the county rich with stunning coastal walks, secluded beaches and wealth of tourist attractions. Ah well, at least there would be four great plays over the weekend to lose ourselves in. The cream of what amateur theatre has to offer in the UK.

The rain persisted as the groups scheduled to perform on Friday night unloaded their sets that afternoon for the get in at the Torch Theatre in Milford Haven. This wasn't fair! The weather was just awful the last time we hosted the British Final in Swansea in 2008: a weekend of horizontal Welsh rain. Not the kind of welcome in the hillside we wanted to give at all.

As the evening began, our audience was beginning to arrive. A good local support for amateur theatre events and good uptake on our all-inclusive package had meant that ticket sales were healthy: always an important element of any festival, especially recently with more festivals struggling to pull in those crucial bums-on-seats.

The atmosphere at the Torch certainly didn't reflect the weather. Upbeat, chatty and buoyant seemed to be the themes of the night, both front of house and backstage. Tech runs had also gone very well that afternoon (in no small way thanks to Technical Manager Andrew Sturley and his rather brilliant and ever-helpful tech crew) and despite the usual nerves, the atmosphere among participating groups was also great.

Wales and Northern Ireland were to perform on Friday night. As host nation, Wales opened the festival with their comedy *Biscuits*, penned by group member Graham J Evans and published by DAW. And to close the evening we had Clarence Players from Northern Ireland performing Nick Warburton's comedy *The Droitwich Discovery*.

Following adjudications from GoDA's Ian Sarginson, festival-goers retired to the various spaces within the Torch Theatre to enjoy the buffet, chat about that night's performances and, in some cases, embark on rather a lot of dancing.

Saturday morning brought the beautiful weather we had been hoping for and a very warm welcome was extended to all participating groups, their supporters and audience members at the Civic Reception hosted by Mayor of Milford Haven and General Manager of the Torch Theatre Guy Woodham. For those of you not familiar with the British Final, the Civic Ceremony provides the opportunity for the local authority to welcome the many visitors to the area and also allows the groups to exchange gifts with each other. Again the festival atmosphere prevailed and you would be hard pushed to notice that this was a competitive festival with the amount of camaraderie and mutual respect which was abundant in the room.

The excellent weather continued for the rest of the day and our Civic host was blessed for his next engagement which was to partake in the Milford Haven Carnival that afternoon. The Torch Theatre balcony provided an excellent vantage point to watch the floats, dancers, jugglers and bands parading past while awaiting the get in for Saturday night's groups.

As the tech runs kicked off in the main theatre, the winning play in the 2012 Geoffrey Whitworth Competition was receiving a script-in hand performance in the studio theatre space. Another healthy audience watched Cardigan Theatre perform Barbara Crass' *Conkers*. Barbara was present for the whole festival and had also seen the play receive its full production in the preliminary rounds of the English One Act Festival so the pressure was on for Cardigan Theatre and their director Christine Rees. They certainly didn't disappoint; the performance was very warmly received by an appreciative audience and Barbara was later presented with the Geoffrey Whitworth Trophy as part of the festival's closing ceremony.

Saturday evening's performances of *In the Blinking of an Eye* from Kirkton Players (another DAW publication) and Total Arts Community Theatre's version of *The Tempest* brought the festival to an excellent end and the anticipation was tangible in the auditorium while the stage was set for the closing ceremony and presentation of awards.

On stage the directors from each of the participating groups was presented with a commemorative medal to mark the occasion. The ceremonial Quaich (a Celtic cup of friendship) was passed to next year's British Final host Alan Marshall from the Association of Ulster Drama Festivals and he extended an invitation to all present to visit Northern Ireland in 2013 when they would be hosting the event.

Our adjudicator, Ian Sarginson was then invited to summarise the festival before announcing the 2012 winner as... Kirkton Players with *In the Blinking of an Eye*.

Thanks are extended to the following folk for making the event possible:

Milford Haven Port Authority

The staff and technical crew of the Torch Theatre, particularly Peter Doran, Guy Woodham and Andrew Sturley

Christine Rees and Cardigan Theatre

Tan Y Castell

Volunteers from Pembrokeshire Drama Association

As organisers of the event, we were very pleased with how the weekend went. There's only so much you can arrange and control in advance of a festival and then certain elements are in the lap of the gods. One of those elements is the groups who progress to the British Final. Of course, we have no control over this at all and it is

	<p>sheer luck that this year we were blessed with groups which, as far as I can tell, were made up entirely of lovely people, with healthy festival attitudes who were there to have a great time and celebrate theatre. I would like to thank Blackwood Little Theatre, The Clarence Players, Kirkton Players and Total Arts Community Theatre not only for entertaining us with their excellent productions but for being great festival groups and brilliant advocates for amateur theatre. You've probably noticed that the weather has been a recurring theme throughout this article but this is a piece about the British Final and what could be more British than talking about the weather?</p>
--	---