

## A Word from the Producer - Andrew Fermor.

Almost two years ago, in the late summer of 1990, I and other of the Rotherfield Players first became involved in the plans for a Pageant as part of Rotherfield's 1200th Anniversary Celebrations. The first thing we needed was a script. Here we had our first stroke of luck - I was introduced to Jean McConnell, a professional playwright, author and dramatist who agreed to help. After a vast amount of research and many happy hours spent in the County Archives at Lewes she delivered her script and, in the main, the Pageant that you will see follows her original concept. We are deeply indebted to her.

In our view the most effective stage for the Pageant would have been Rotherfield Square itself. The Police, however, remained strangely unconvinced by our arguments that the interests of art should supersede those of traffic flow, so this pipedream was replaced by the more practical alternative of the lower recreation ground, with the Church forming the backdrop.

The months were now passing swiftly and realisation was dawning of the growing magnitude of the undertaking. Clearly experienced help was again needed - and fast! Then came the second stroke of luck when a chance conversation led to Peter Sowerbutts agreeing to take on the task of artistic director. Peter is a professional actor and director and it is his professionalism, his attention to detail and, above all, his enthusiasm that have been the backbone of this production.

So the preparations have at last reached their climax: rehearsals, set-building, costumes, lighting, sound, advertising, car parking and all the thousands of tasks, great and small, that are essential to a production that will be worthy of the history it is celebrating.

The 1200th Anniversary is a celebration for the church and for the village and the wholehearted support of so many of the people of Rotherfield has been most encouraging. We needed, and received, the participation of a large proportion of its inhabitants. Indeed, with a speaking cast of nearly fifty and a non-speaking cast, backstage and front-of-house crews numbering over one hundred, the Pageant could not have survived without that support. I am proud to say that we have among our supporters at least two actresses who took part in the last Rotherfield Pageant in 1923.

The 1992 Rotherfield Pageant has been a lot of hard work but a tremendous experience for everyone. I hope you will all enjoy the occasion - after all, it may be several hundred years before you get another chance!