



Bottom left: Jesus crucified with two criminals; far left: Mary, the mother of Jesus, cradles his body; left: the risen Jesus greets his disciples and below: Jesus appears from the crowd to those on the Emmaus Road



Passion Play is a real inspiration

IT WAS AN INSPIRING production, which brought the story of Jesus into the heart of the Havant community.

Around 1,500 people watched Jesus's death and resurrection re-enacted in two performances in Havant Park last month. Havant Passion Play told the story of the last week of Jesus's earthly life in a two-hour, open-air production.

A cast of 70, mostly amateur actors, from churches in Havant, Bedhampton and Leigh Park, had improvised scenes which were then scripted and brought to life.

The performance included depictions of Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, his rage at the money-lenders in the temple, the Last Supper, and Jesus's trial. The crucifixion of Jesus and two criminals was followed by a moving scene in which Mary, the mother of Jesus cradled his body.

It showed the reaction of his disciples and followers to Jesus's death, and then their amazement at the empty tomb and appearances by the resurrected Christ. The play was based on Luke's gospel.

David Wiseman, the organist at St Faith's Church, Havant, played the part of the disciple Andrew and also a criminal who was crucified with Jesus.

"I felt a sense of calling when I heard about the play, and it was a privilege to have such a high-profile part," he said. "Workshopping scenes was new to me, as I'd always worked with a script before, but there was an enormous sense of satisfaction in getting a scene right."

"It was strange being hoisted up to be crucified, but it did give



me a different perspective. It was actually quite uncomfortable, so perhaps that's a little insight into how Jesus might have felt. I do feel this was quite an achievement for Havant to stage a play like this, and real friendships have been formed between churches."

Professional director James Burke-Dunsmore, who also played the part of Jesus, said: "The cast did absolutely the best show they could do, and they were the best qualified to tell this story to their own community. They've set the bar really high, and other communities will take inspiration from this to produce their own shows."

Both performances were preceded by the chance for families to enjoy a picnic in Havant Park, with entertainment from the Solent Male Voice Choir and Folks in Harmony. Community groups such as Havant

U3A, Bench Theatre, Havant and Emsworth Townswomen's Guild, and Southdowns Peace Group showcased their activities.

Churches Together in Havant, Bedhampton and Leigh Park had been working on the project for

years. Project leader Geoff Paffett was delighted at the outcome.

"I never dreamt that it would be as sensational as this," he said. "I had seen the play during rehearsals, so spent some of the time watching the audience.

Young and old, churchgoers and casual passers-by, they were spellbound.

"Our cast did an amazing job. I want to thank them for their commitment, and all the backstage people and those who organised this major community event. The bonding between people has been incredible and I'm sure that will carry on.

"But most of all, I want to thank God. From the moment we decided that we should do this, he has guided us. Whenever there has been a problem, we've prayed and God has provided a solution. Our prayer now is that others who saw this play would also put their trust in God. If we've sown the seeds and touched people's hearts, we've done our job."

• For more photos and video highlights, see: www.portsmouth.anglican.org

Aleka retires after 40 years

AFTER more than 40 years as an Akela, Mary Mant has hung up her neckerchief and woggle.

Mary (pictured left) has led the 5th Portsmouth Cub Pack which meets at St James Church, Milton since 1987. She started as an Akela in 1974 at a pack which met in the Royal Marines Barracks at Eastney.

Mary said: "I got into scouting entirely by accident. My son was in the cubs and they were looking for help so I volunteered. When they were looking for an Akela, I volunteered and I've been in

scouting ever since.

"I found being Akela really rewarding – I have given a lot to it over the years but I have also received so much too."

Joining the scouting movement also led Mary to start attending St James Church.

On her last evening, there was a farewell indoor camp fire with logs and tea lights. Mary was presented with a 'thank you' badge, a tea-light lantern and a framed collage of photos

She was also made President of the scout group in recognition of her commitment.

