

Picture: DAVE J HOGAN

Dame tells how Express exposed Beckett wedding

By **Julia Kuttner**

THE remarkable story of how an Express journalist got caught up in a cat-and-mouse game with legendary writer Samuel Beckett in a bid to reveal his secret wedding is being told in a new production starring actors Dame Harriet Walter and Russell Tovey.

Sixty years ago Beckett, one of the world's greatest playwrights, spent a fortnight hiding out in the seaside town of Folkestone, Kent, to secretly marry his French partner Suzanne Dechevaux-Dumesnil so she could inherit his publishing rights.

He travelled from their home in Paris to Folkestone in 1961 hoping to go undetected, but the journalist already had the scoop.

Thrown off the scent by Beckett's publisher, the reporter – who is not named in the production – was told the *Waiting For Godot* writer was not in the UK, despite seeing him in the town and watching him leave the registry office with his new bride on March 25, 1961.

The immersive multi-media theatrical event is part of the Creative Folkestone Book Festival.

Tovey plays the reporter and Dame Harriet plays a witness to the wedding. The actors recorded monologues, which are screened



WAITING FOR SAMUEL: Audiences watch monologues on 60s TVs

on 1960s television sets at various locations in Folkestone as audiences follow in the journalist's footsteps.

The *Crown and Killing Eve* star Dame Harriet says of the story: "The journalist calls and the agent says, 'Oh you are joking, he is in Africa'. It was a very well-kept secret."

Speaking of the challenges faced by the reporter, she says: "Sixty years ago you couldn't just click on a website or look at their Twitter record or any of that, you just had to chase

people. He asked at all the grand hotels if they had a Mr Beckett staying there, but the playwright wasn't staying under his own name. A few days later the reporter saw Beckett stepping out of the registry office with a woman, the reporter was on the bus and shouted for the driver to stop."

Dame Harriet recorded her monologues in her home studio built during lockdown.

The *Shape Of Things To Come* runs until next Sunday. For details, visit creativefolkestone.org.uk

Dame Harriet Walter stars in *The Shape Of Things To Come*, an immersive multi-media event that tells the story of Samuel Beckett's secret marriage



Concern over criminals applying for care roles

By **Matthew Davis**

PAEDOPHILES, killers and drug dealers were among 12,000 ex-criminals who applied for jobs as carers in the last year.

But with recruitment difficulties and low wages in the care sector, it is not known how many were still hired by employers so desperate for staff.

Details from the government's Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) also revealed thousands of these would-be carers were found to have committed theft-related offences, including people who had stolen from their employers.

Last year, 11,900 applications revealed criminal histories amounting to 60,906 offences, either with court convictions, cautions or warnings.

The litany of criminals applying for care worker jobs also included people with convictions for fraud, violence and sexual offences.

One had a conviction for attempted murder, nine had been found guilty of manslaughter and another 27 had killed someone while driving dangerously, carelessly or recklessly.

The details of an applicant's criminal past are passed on to the prospective employer, who then decides whether or not to proceed.

Carers could work in a variety of situations such as a care home or working as a home help, where they would often have unsupervised access to vulnerable, elderly clients.

The criminal records are all held by DBS, which



PREVIOUS: Adebayo



CAMPAIGN: Mr Reed

trawls the Police National Computer for offences committed by people applying for jobs where they have access to children or vulnerable people.

Among other offences disclosed about prospective carers last year were around 5,000 assaults – of which more than 700 were on the police – 3,343 burglaries and 689 thefts by an employee.

The database also revealed three cases of bigamy, five incidents of revenge porn and 10 cases of sexual assaults on children.

As well as hundreds of would-be carers who had drug convictions, there were 54 cases of dealing in heroin and 84 for peddling cocaine. Two had a record for forging prescriptions for medicines.

The DBS also revealed six rape convictions,

seven blackmail cases, five with a criminal record for kidnap, nine with cruelty convictions relating to animals, six with cruelty offences relating to the care of children and 31 who had been convicted or cautioned for exposing themselves.

In 2017, carer Adebayo Adebayo was jailed for 21 years for the attempted murder of 90-year-old Pamela Batten, who she hit on the head with a hammer and stabbed in the neck. It came to light that Adebayo, 53, was employed despite her agency knowing she had previous convictions.

Pamela's son Sammy said after the case: "Everyone's got to have a job, but you can't put a fox in charge of the hen house. What's the point of vetting someone if you ignore the results?"

Dennis Reed, of elderly campaign group Silver Voices, said: "These statistics are horrifying. Given the number of past offenders found out by the system many more must be slipping through the net."

"Physical, sexual and financial abuse of vulnerable older people goes largely unreported and can be difficult to prove, particularly if dementia is involved. Also, a major element of the social care crisis is that it is a low-paid, low esteemed, and unqualified sector, which makes it easy to access for those with ulterior motives"

Dr Suzanne Smith, from the DBS, said: "Our role is to help employers make safer recruitment decisions. Irrespective of the information revealed on a DBS check, the decision to employ someone ultimately rests with the employer."

Race attack leaves two in hospital

TWO men are recovering in hospital after a racially aggravated assault in Liverpool city centre.

One victim suffered suspected stab wounds while the other received a chest injury from an unknown weapon in the incident in Sir Thomas Street at about 5.40am yesterday.

Both men, in their 20s, were taken to hospital and are in a stable condition.

It appears two men chased the victims from Cheapside towards Dale Street and racial abuse was shouted at them, Merseyside Police said.

The suspects are white and in their 20s.

Det Insp Laura Parr said: "Such violence will have been shocking to witness and exacerbated by what we believe were racially abusive comments."

"We will always thoroughly investigate serious violence and hate crime, and do everything within our powers to ensure those responsible are put before the courts."