

Barn Theatre News

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June Was a Cool Month, Time to Chill Out

After 2 years of planning and 18 months of fundraising, Sunday June 1st was the day the theatre closed for a month and preparations started for the arrival of the builders and engineers during the following week. Apart from installing air conditioning to the foyer and auditorium, we were scheduled to complete many other works of improvement and maintenance whilst we had the opportunity of an empty theatre, so there was much to do. The trustees with others set to and by the time Sunday Club that day started, the theatre was ready for works to commence.

On Monday 2nd June I was at the theatre to open up and get the kettle on at 7 a.m. ready to welcome the various and diverse teams of subcontractors due during that morning. Frank Boonham followed me in, as he too had specialist theatre electrical engineers coming to complete various works and alterations. By 9 a.m. the builders were starting work in the foyer and clearing the loft of years of dust and rubbish, scaffolders were busily erecting the main access scaffold to the rear gable, air-conditioning engineers were modifying the existing equipment in the bar area and the stage electricians were busy cleaning and PAT testing all our stage lights that had been removed on the previous Sunday morning. The noisy fan heaters in the auditorium were being removed for the replacement high efficiency radiators and Lofty our electrician was preparing for the hundreds of meters of cabling that needed to be installed for the new AC units in the loft and at the rear of the kitchen externally. All this, whilst we were also trying to redirect the nursery school mothers who couldn't park as normal due to lorries on site and Oxted School parents who still considered it a right to use our car park for dropping off their children!

By the end of the first day we were flying – everything was falling into place and any initial problems or queries were resolved immediately. The contractors had all been appointed as known entities and many had worked closely together on other projects for me so I knew the team and was delighted we were together again.

Tuesday was another good day and by the end of that first week both Frank and I were amazed at the progress that had been made by all the team. There was no stopping us now, the back was broken and we knew even at this early stage that we would have no problems with getting the theatre open again for business by the date we had forecast.

The end result was that we commissioned the new air conditioning four days earlier than planned and after a hectic few days and a weekend cleaning, dusting and reassembling, left the theatre ready for business as from 30th June as promised. At The Oxted Players AGM on the following Wednesday, I suspect people were wondering what we had been up to for the last month!

My personal thanks to Frank Boonham, who, whilst convinced that I am crazy at times, always give his full support and professional input to all our theatre projects. To the trustees and FOBs for their help and support and to those others who turned up to help with stripping and reassembling the theatre before and after the works. I must also congratulate and thank all the contractors, who without exception, worked extremely hard to provide a discreet and successful installation that I hope will serve our patrons well.

None of this would have been possible without your help fundraising, so a big thank you to you all too.

Bruce Reed

