

BARN THEATRE

NEWS

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Barn, Bentley and Bruce

We have just come through the season of AGMs at the Barn Theatre. Both the Oxted Operatic Society and The Oxted Players held theirs in July but the AGM of the Oxted & Limpsfield Barn Theatre Company Limited, held on 8th June, was a very special occasion. It was exactly 25 years ago that Bruce Reed, already a barn director for nine years, was elected Chairman of the Company.

This year, in his report to a packed theatre, Bruce began by saying that 25 years ago he had arrived at the Barn Theatre resplendent in his new vintage Bentley which he had collected and driven down from London that afternoon; the pleasure and delight soon faded, however, when at the conclusion of the evening he had to be pushed out of the car park as the damn thing wouldn't start. This evening he said he arrived on two walking sticks. How things have changed.

Well, things have certainly changed under Bruce's leadership. The Theatre is flourishing more now than at any other time in its long history. For many years during the summer months the theatre was dark; now it is fully used by a number of aspiring youth groups. Over the years, as Theatre Manager, Bruce has also enthusiastically and proactively increased the number of shows staged at the Barn each year, inviting new groups to perform and booking 'one night stands' and special gala evenings. His most recent success was "Spirit of the Brave" in support of 'Help the Heroes' at which the Barn raised £11,000 for the charity, the most money raised to date from a single performance.

Bruce has also been the driving force behind most of the improvements to the Theatre. With his business acumen and expertise in maintaining older properties he masterminded the project known as Barn 2000 when the board decided to build the extension. He also became the project manager for another major improvement, the air conditioning system. His knowledge, drive and attention to detail have always meant that all the jobs have been executed to exacting criteria. His love of the theatre is shown in the real joy he gets from designing and building sets for Barn productions. Because of his drive and organisational skills he has always been able to enlist a large team of volunteers to work alongside him and, with Bruce leading, the team have built some memorable sets, particularly those that head off to the world famous Minack Theatre in Cornwall.

To mark the occasion at the end of the AGM fellow Barn director Phil Littleford invited Bruce onto the stage to thank him publicly for all his hard work and dedication during this time. A large number of individuals and all the regular hirers of the theatre had combined to make a presentation to mark a remarkable quarter century. Bruce was presented with a case of wine and a congratulatory card and then was invited to unveil a specially commissioned art work consisting of a piece of Barn oak surmounted by two ceramic masks depicting comedy and tragedy and an inscribed plaque. He explained that the card enclosed many letters of congratulation from the regular hirers of the Theatre.



Bruce gets stuck in

Company Secretary Chris Hepher then read out tributes to Bruce from the South Eastern Councillor of The National Operatic and Dramatic Association, Mike Tilbury of the Guild of Drama Adjudicators and Ann Aplin, the chairman of the National Executive Committee of the All England Theatre Festival.

Everybody then retired to the bar where the celebrations continued with wine and cake cutting.

Flushed with Success

After 80 years of accessing toilets directly from the dressing rooms there are, at last, plans afoot to construct a new toilet block in the backstage area. With only a tight space available with many physical restrictions this will not be easy but we hope to be able to publish some draft plans in the near future. The little red buckets are becoming quite excited at the thought of another outing, not for what you're thinking, but to raise cash for this project!

Oxted Carnival Capers

The annual Oxted Carnival on July 2nd was a wonderful sunny event with lots of local support out there on Master Park and resounding sales of £1288 for us from the sale of teas and homemade cakes. Certainly the largest amount we have ever taken at this annual event. Thank you and well done all those that helped in any small way to make the day such a success for Oxted and the Barn.