

BARN THEATRE

NEWS

Volume 18 issue 2 May 2014



90 FABULOUS YEARS AND STILL GOING STRONG

The ethos of the Barn when it was conceived back in 1923 was to provide a facility that would ***“foster the activities of the several social organisations and provide an excellent centre for every form of public and private entertainment”***

The site was chosen particularly on account “of its accessibility to all parts of the district and being equally distant from the centre of both parishes of Limpsfield and Oxted. It is also close to the Railway Station, whilst Omnibuses pass within a stones throw of the building”.

When the project was first announced in the Surrey Mirror of May 25th 1923 it was confirmed that the Oxted and Limpsfield Players and the Crichton Dramatic Club had appointed a committee to oversee the planning and building of the new public hall which would seat 350 in comfort, (now 246). The Surrey Mirror went on to say that owing to the kindness of local resident Lewis G Fry the committee had secured, for £75, the old Saw Mill Barn which was then standing at the bottom of Limpsfield village. A recent specialist survey has confirmed that the main structural timbers date from between 1362 and 1433 with the probability that the sawmill barn was constructed during 1434.

The money to finance the project was to be raised by the selling of shares in a new public company with limited liability. The Chairman of the Company was to be Sir Ernest Benn, publisher and grandfather of Tony Benn (just deceased) and he was to be accompanied on the board by a number of local gentry.

The land on which the main theatre is constructed was purchased from the Hoskins Master family on 23rd October 1923 for £275 pounds.

The theatre was designed by a firm of architects Matthews Ridley, built by local contractor James Bodle and opened by Mr Harley Granville Barker, a local playwright, on 24th May 1924, less than 9 months after completion of the purchase of the land. The cost of construction was £3742.12s.1d including seating and basic stage lighting equipment.

The Nation newspaper, which subsequently became the New Statesman spoke highly of **“the very beautiful Barn Theatre”** and the first production, a double bill of ‘School for Scandal’ and ‘As You Like It’ performed by the Crichton Dramatic Club.

There followed a period of great activity and the demand for lettings was greater than could be satisfied, a situation mirrored today, 90 years on.

For any arts organisation to survive for 90 years without outside or local authority financial support is a measure of the strength of the organisation and those who work within it in any manner of ways. From the very beginning the Barn has been very fortunate to have many willing volunteers who have continuously striven to ensure that the place is a success and that continues today.

To celebrate the 90 years we have a programme of shows and entertainment that we hope you will support and enjoy. There is something for everyone and of all ages too, so please check below, study the fliers that came in the envelope with this issue and book your tickets to ensure that you are part of this special celebration.

BARN 90

A Festival of Entertainment

Saturday 31st May at 7.45pm

Randy and the Rockets

Sunday 1st June

Special Celebration Lunch at 12.30pm

The Wabbit King at 4.30pm and 7pm

Thursday 5th June at 7.45pm

The Whore’s Tale and Easy Stages

Friday 6th June at 7.45pm

Cheek by Cheek with the New Foxtrot Serenaders

Saturday 7th June at 7.30pm

Let Us Entertain You Too

Sunday 8th June

Barn Theatre Open Day 11am - 3.30pm

FOBs Quiz Night with a difference at 7pm

Thursday 12th June at 7.45pm

An Evening of Songs from the Shows

Friday 13th June at 7.45pm

Nicholas Nickleby with Gerald Dickens

Saturday 14th June at 7.30pm

Schoolfest

www.barntheatreoxted.co.uk or 01959561811

“How’s your spelling?!”



We are delighted to announce that **The Barnstormers** will be returning to the Barn (this time actually inside the theatre!) in October this year with the hilarious smash hit musical comedy ‘**The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee**’. They will be staging four performances from Wednesday 22nd to Saturday 25th October and we hope that many of you will come and join in the fun and support The Barnstormers’ continuing efforts to raise funds for our DRIP charity project.

The spelling bee (competition) is a modern day American phenomenon that has been brought to the stage in this quirky Tony Award winning musical comedy. It tells the story of six young people in the throes of puberty, overseen by grown-ups who barely managed to escape childhood themselves, and who learn that winning isn’t everything and that losing doesn’t necessarily make you a loser.

A hilarious tale of overachiever’s angst that chronicles the experiences of six adolescent outsiders vying for the spelling championship of a lifetime. It is the unlikeliest of hit musicals about the unlikeliest of heroes: a quirky yet charming cast of outsiders for whom the spelling bee is the one place where they can stand out and fit in at the same time.

The show is being produced and directed by Richard Allen, who is joined by Barn regulars, Colin Warnock as Musical Director and Fran Newitt as Associate Director / Choreographer.

This is the first time the musical has been produced at the Barn Theatre and we’ve no doubt that The Barnstormers will once again be pulling out all the stops. They promise us a unique, funny and memorable evening’s entertainment with perhaps just a few unexpected star turns from some lucky audience volunteers!

Tickets priced £15.00 each are available now from 01959 561811 or by credit/debit card from www.barntheatreoxted.co.uk, so why not dust off your dictionary, book your tickets, keep those dates free, and join everyone at the Bee!



Richard Allen standing by the wall of winners at the Minack Theatre in Cornwall, sandwiched between his two winning productions now carved in stone for all to see and holding the Minack Trophy awarded for the 2013 production of Parade. A very proud moment for Richard and all Barnstormers.

FOBS

The AGM in March saw the retirement of two valuable members: Sheila Bennett after eight years of Chairmanship and also of Bridget Carey who had been Secretary for a number of years. Their contribution has been much appreciated.

Lizzie Skinner and David Sutton were approved as committee members and their younger viewpoints and enthusiasm will ensure the continued development of FOBS.

Having recently seen the excellent production of 'Pirates of Penzance', we are looking forward to 'Gaslight' and to the two weeks of '**BARN 90**' commencing on 31st May.

It is with sadness that we learned of the death of Val Tidy, a long time supporter of the theatre. Members of FOBS attended her funeral.

The FOBs invite you on Sunday 8th June at 7pm in the theatre to join them for their first social (in far too long!) “A Quiz with a Difference” helping the theatre celebrate its 90th anniversary.

Take a break during the exciting two week programme and join them for an entertaining, quizzical and above all light-hearted evening at the Barn. Not only will they be getting your old grey matter working, but they are also planning to test all of your senses, with some quirky rounds requiring you to listen, taste and touch! A Posh Ploughman’s supper is included in the price and the bar will be open all evening. So why not get a team of friends (6-8 persons) together or if not they can slot you into a team on the night. Come along have some fun and expect something a little different!

Contact Lizzie Skinner for more details. Tickets are £10 from 01959 561811 credit and debit card bookings online at www.barntheatreoxted.co.uk.

Looking forward to seeing you there!

Southern Counties Drama Festival

February 24th to March 1st 2014

After a warm and thoroughly entertaining welcome from Peter Calver (Festival Chairman), the Festival continued apace for the rest of the week with some high class drama of all genres. The results for the week were very close with Mole Valley Scriptwriters Group as Festival Winners with their production of *Satin Doll* by Tony Earnshaw. Runner up was Sevenoaks Players with their production of *The Trial* by Anthony Booth, Best Stage presentation went to *Alternate Shadows* with their very effective cellar in Canary Cage by Diana Raffle. Awards for Best Actor, Best Actress and Martin Patrick award for Best Director, all went to the cast of the Oxted Players with their production of *The Whores Tale* by Archie Wilson. For the youth section Glow Theatre Company were winners of the Best Youth Award with their production of *Blood Brothers* by Willy Russell which also won them Best Young Actor award shared by two of their cast Jamie Patterson and Sean Wareing. Best Young Actress award went to Natasha Cooper of Heathfield Drama Club in *Obsessed* by Mike Newbold and Ivo Salway also of Heathfield Drama Club won the Adjudicators Award for his excellent playing in *Small Fry* by Neil Duffield.

Mole Valley Scriptwriters Group will represent the Eastern Area at the semi final of the AETF over the weekend of 3rd and 4th May and we wish them the best of luck.

Tea and Cakes Time Comes Round Again

Saturday 5th July is the annual Oxted Carnival and as usual the Barn stalwarts will be out on the field early erecting the tea tents ready for the afternoon crush of visitors. Always a fun day, getting some fresh air and working in daylight rather than a dark theatre, it is the opportunity for the theatre to support the community as we hope they will support us. Many of you will receive the annual phone call from Caro in the weeks before – please do your best to supply the stall with your usual delicious home made cakes.



Pirates of Penzance



Our April Production, *Pirates of Penzance*, closed with a sell-out Saturday evening performance and excellent reviews and glowing comments from each evening's audiences but one thing that especially shone out for me was what a happy show it was. The cast all got along famously and pulled together to make the production the success it was. Indicative of this was the fact that, 2 weeks before opening, ticket sales were very sluggish and, to put it mildly, of some concern but many members of the cast donned costumes and paraded Oxted high street on two Saturday mornings handing out leaflets and generally promoting the show. I am reliably informed that Mr John Harris, dressed as a policeman, targeted the unsuspecting public at the zebra crossing and threatened arrest for not buying tickets! Mr Chris Hepher managed to get a recorded message onto Classic FM and everyone generally did their bit to sell to friends and family, notably Geoff Martin, Elise Claringbull and Mike Tomlin who would all win the award (if one existed!) for selling by the row rather than by the seat! By the end of the run, ticket sales had very nearly doubled compared to a month earlier. All in all, it was a pleasure to be a part of this production, whether it was as part of the production team, on the stage, in the wings or front of house and my sincere thanks go to everyone that made it the experience that it was.

Joseph and The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat

"Joseph" is now fully cast and our talented OJOS will begin rehearsals the first week of May following a bonding and music session in April with the production team of Carly Thompson as Director, Andy Payne as MD and Catherine Blundell as Choreographer. Tickets went on sale 3 weeks ago and are being snapped up at a rate of knots, in fact, the final performance on the Saturday evening is already 48% sold so don't delay, buy your tickets today! **Tickets available online at www.barntheatreoxted.co.uk or by calling yours truly on the box office hotline: 07530 528094**

Barn 90th A Festival of Entertainment

We will be presenting an evening of **Songs from the Shows, a potted history of Oxted Operatic, on Thursday 12th June** and had our first get together on the 15th April with our MD for the event, Tom Carradine who has recently finished a professional tour of *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. There was a very definite feel of excitement in the air as we all sang through a few well-known pieces of music from shows past. Members of the OOS are welcome to take part and, whilst auditions are not necessary for those wishing to sing in the chorus, auditions will be held for those who would like to perform a solo. For further information on taking part, contact the lady of the moment who is organizing the whole shebang, Fiona Steel at secretary@oxtedoperatic.co.uk

Thoroughly Modern Millie

We will shortly be announcing our Production Team for our November offering, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, but we will be looking for some strong dancers for this show so if you want to tap and Charleston to your heart's content, watch this space for further information. We are hoping to run some tap workshops for anyone wishing to polish their skills or learn the basics. Don't forget that these skills will be called on

again in November 2015 when we will be performing *42nd Street*. There will be an initial get together for "Millie" in late July followed by a round of auditions. Rehearsals begin in early September. Please register your interest by emailing secretary@oxtedoperatic.co.uk or chairman@oxtedoperatic.co.uk and we will keep you in touch with all dates and announcements.

Dena Watts

Happy Wabbits Day

Sunday 1st June 4.30 & 7pm

Having made their professional debut at the Barn Theatre as part of the Oxted Adventure, the Wabbits are delighted to be coming back with their 'wagical' new musical *The Wabbit King*, as part of the **Barn 90** celebrations.

The delightful Wabbit puppets have been made by Oxted local and Barn Theatre regular Jill 'Wigs' Wilson, and will be brought to 'wagical' life by talented young actors and puppeteers.

The Wabbit King is being produced by local professional theatre



company Another Way Theatre in collaboration with The Arc Arts Centre, Caterham. Written by ex-Caterhamian, Chris Chambers, **The Wabbit King is a charming** piece of musical theatre for all ages and delivers an important message about bullying in an entertaining way. It is particularly suitable for children aged 5 to 11 years and tackles major

areas of the primary PSHE curriculum.

Wiggy started her theatrical career at the Barn in the early seventies designing lots of shows for both the Student Players and Oxted Operatic Society and since 1992 she has mainly been involved whenever there is an opportunity to take a show to the Minack. She originally trained at Reigate Art College and after two weeks work experience at Selfridges she became part of the team behind the world famous Christmas window displays. In 1984 she went freelance and has worked on a huge variety of projects from tiny scale models to huge floats for the Lord Mayor's Show. She prides herself on her great attention to detail, and will do her utmost to create something extra special whether it be for a big corporate client or local dramatic group.

We are extremely fortunate to have Wiggy as Another Way Theatre's resident designer and in June last year she created the most incredible Oyster Bed and 16ft Cleopatra's Needle for our production of *ANTONY & CLEOPATRA* for The Minack Theatre. In July she helped design & construct a huge life-size tree for The Barnstormers production of *PARADE* erected at The Barn & Minack Theatre. And by mid August, Wiggy had already carved six polystyrene rabbit puppets who travelled in the car wherever she went. Friends and family started referring to them as 'Wiggy's Wabbits' and hence the puppet show being named **The Wabbit King**.

I first encountered her wonderful creative talent 30 years ago, in 1984, when she designed a production of *GODSPELL* at The Barn Theatre. This unassuming and amazing lady made me a huge rainbow jelly to help celebrate my 18th Birthday which I shared with the rest of the cast and crew including many names you may recognise - Cat Longhurst (then Newitt), Chrissie Rodgers, Helen Harris-Rees and Julian Chenery. Janet Brown directed and musical direction was in the ever capable hands of Colin Warnock.

I feel very privileged to be able to bring *The Wabbit's* to The Barn for their 90th celebrations and look forward to seeing many familiar faces in the audience.

Don't miss this charming new show - suitable for children of all ages! Tickets £8 only
Book now for an end of half term treat from the Barn Theatre **Box Office 01959 561811 www.barntheatreoxted.co.uk**



Spring has brought with it further successes for our society. Our entry into the Southern Counties Drama Festival, *The Whore's Tale*, directed by Chris Bassett saw him win the Martin Patrick Award for Best Director and also acting awards went to Ghislaine Bowden (Best Actress) and Alan Webber (Best Actor). The team went on to perform

the play to a very appreciative audience at the Harlequin Theatre, Redhill, during the BRBAC Festival Week in April and **will be performing once again on 5 June during the Barn 90th Birthday Celebrations in a double bill alongside the Stag Theatre Company.**

Our Young Players have also been in excellent form. Our February Half Term Workshop with David Rowan saw two groups of children performing *Up the Empire* and *Inspector Wicket and the Open and Shut Case* to the delight of their Friday audience. All the children worked very hard and learned a great deal during the week and there is now a real buzz from our young membership in anticipation of our August week long workshop.

Hot on the heels of the Workshop came our 2014 Youth play, *Carrie's War*, directed by our President June Brown. Sigrid Sherrell's review for "The Chronicle" congratulated the production and its set design and said "It could be quite forgotten that the actors in *Carrie's War* were just youngsters so strong were their performances – but as members of the Young Oxted Players, perhaps it is only to be expect-



ed, as the Oxted Players themselves are one of the best amateur theatrical companies around". Particularly mentioned in her review were Sophie Moss (*Carrie*), Arlo Copp (*Nick*), Barnaby Stott (*Mr. Evans*), Fern Simmons (*Auntie Lou*), Teddy Stevenson (*Albert Sandwich*), Megan Saunders (*Mrs. Gotobed*) and Katie Bartholomew (*Hezbollah Green*).

However, Sigrid felt that the stand out performance of the night had to go to Elliott Myers for his portrayal of *Mr Johnny* who suffers from cerebral palsy. She felt that Elliott managed this very difficult part with consummate ease.

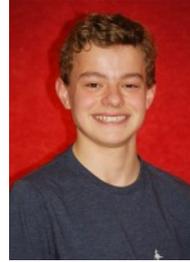
Some of our Young Players were also able to take to the stage as evacuees and gained valuable theatrical experience despite their limited appearances.

Our May play, the Victorian thriller *Gaslight* by Patrick Hamilton (**14 to 17 May 2014**), is in its final stages of rehearsal and is, with its excellent cast and intriguing story line, a truly 'not to be missed' production.

The evil *Jack Manningham* is played by Peter Damesick with Jules Silverman as his frail wife *Bella*. Coming to her rescue is *Sergeant Rough* (Chris Butler) who has a score to settle with *Mr. Manningham*. *Nancy*, the maid who is seduced by *Jack* is played by Stephanie Hornett-Johnson and Angela Webb is *Elizabeth*, the *Manningham's* housekeeper. Also making very brief but vital appearances in the closing scene are Vince Edwards and Alan Webber. Tickets are obtainable on 01883 724852 for cheque payments or on line at www.barntheatreoxted.co.uk for card payments (booking fee applies).

Looking forward to the Autumn, the society are commemorating the 100th anniversary of the start of The First World War with its production of *My Boy Jack* by David Haig (**15 to 18 October with Saturday matinee**). This is a very powerful and poignant play based on true events which bring home the horror, tragedy and sadness of a war which touched the lives of so many people. Elizabeth Callow directs, and anyone interested in being involved in the production in any way please contact us on catherine.webber@btinternet.com

A Young Oxted Player speaks to us at BTN



The Young Oxted Players put on *Carrie's War* in March and I was so glad to be a part of it. I have been in other productions at the Barn for the OJOS (Oxted Junior Operatic Society) but this was my first all dialogue show and I really loved the change. The cast and crew all put on an amazing show and we had such a fun time rehearsing it. In the first few weeks of rehearsals it was hard to see how it would all come together, but thanks to the team, we had an amazing train to travel on, an atmospheric grove and fresh ham sandwiches for each performance!

Being a Young Oxted Player requires a lot of patience and concentration but in the end, it's all worth it. The cast of *Carrie's War* were all so nice and everyone got along really well; even if we weren't all familiar with each other. We shared some funny moments like when someone missed their line during an important scene, or people slipping up (some literally!) and of course, the Welsh accents and having to learn a Welsh hymn was a fun challenge! It was a great show for all of us and I can't wait for the next one. Many thanks to June Brown and her team for putting the show on.

Teddy Stevenson

DRIP donation

Jonathan Tull Chairman of the Oxted Players presents Bruce Reed, Chairman of the Barn theatre with a cheque for £5000 as a generous donation towards the Dressing Room Improvement Project



Katanya returns to the Barn in December, with her Motown band



Imperial Grooves are one of the top Motown and Soul bands in the UK. The group features some of the UK's top session musicians to bring you the best in live Motown and Soul music. The vocalists are truly the best there are, having won MOBO awards and clocked up performances alongside the likes of Ed Sheeran, Beverley Knight, Boys II Men and

Stevie Wonder. The energetic show covers the classics including Marvin Gaye, Aretha Franklin, Sister Sledge, Stevie Wonder, The Four Tops, The Temptations, Jackie Wilson, Ben E King and many more.

Katanya Pierre-Louise the female vocalist, was last seen at the Barn in the Barnstormers production of Parade, when she played the part of Angela, and we are delighted to welcome her back.

Saturday December 6th is the date for your diaries and book your tickets now www.barntheatreoxted.co.uk or 01959561811

The Editor of Barn Theatre News is Bruce Reed
barntheatre@btinternet.com