

BARN THEATRE

NEWS

Volume 16 issue 3 August 2012



Terry Rolph



On Friday 20th July, as the Olympic flame passed nearby, a memorial service was held at St Peter's Church, Limpsfield to celebrate the life of Terry Rolph.

Terry's passion for the theatre began shortly after he married Pat in 1951. She was a member of Greenwich Oper-

atic and, missing her when she attended rehearsals, he decided to join the society as a member of the crew so he could see more of his new wife. When they moved to Oxted Pat joined Oxted Operatic so Terry did too, beginning a long and devoted association with the theatre. Terry brought his skills as a chartered surveyor and over the years designed and built some memorable sets for a great many shows. Being a master craftsman he always built good, solid sets. I remember in one of my productions, *Cabaret*, a railway compartment was needed for a short scene at the beginning. Terry provided us with the full works; a truly remarkable replica of a German railway compartment of the time. Of all the many sets he designed and built I think he was most proud of the one he built for *Man of la Mancha*.

Over the years Terry and Pat became leading lights in the running of the Society; in turn Terry became Treasurer, Chairman, and then President. He only trod the boards once, under an executioner's hood in *The Vagabond King*.

On top of his backstage career, Terry helped to launch The Friends of the Barn and set about raising money for a new roof and new seating for the Barn Theatre. He became Chairman and President and today Fobs continues to go from strength to strength and are an important part of the continuing success of the theatre.

Terry passed on his skills and love of the Barn to his children Nicola and Christopher. Nicola performs regularly at the theatre, while Chris helped his father design sets, including one for his favourite show *Mack and Mabel*. Terry was always so supportive towards his grandson David, and was so proud when David recently graduated from Bristol Old Vic Theatre School with BA Hons in Stage Management and Technical Theatre.

Before settling down with Pat, Terry carved out a career with the RAF, joining at the age of 17 and completing his flight training in Canada. Failing his first pilot's course through illness, he worked as a dustman in Edmonton before earning his wings. Other adventures followed including flying rather too low over a farm when he got a frying pan stuck in his wing from an irate housewife! His favourite form of navigation was CPR, Canadian Pacific Railway!

One posting was Aden with Eight Squadron Flying Wellingtons. On anti-submarine duty in 1944 he sank an Italian sub which had already surrendered! With 194 Squadron or "The Friendly Firm", he flew a Douglas Dakota for transport command, dropping Chindits behind enemy lines (allied forces). After VJ day he flew Japanese POWs home, their appalling treatment making a lasting impression on him.

Having lived most of his married life at Priest Hill Lodge in Limpsfield it was a great wrench when Pat and he sold it and moved to Pastens Road. He then devoted his time to Pat, supporting her through her long illness but still working at the Barn, making out things were ok. Even after Pat lost her fight with cancer Terry returned to the Barn, spending more time behind the bar in the 'cellar' as he called it. There he met Bridgett, who has since been his companion. Without her he found life bleak, and she made his last few years happy.

Terry was a great Ambassador for the Barn over many years, and most of those who came into contact with him during this time will have their own story to tell. For me my memory is of him always giving praise and encouragement as well as honest critique when required.

The memory of Terry will live on in the rafters and beams of the Barn Theatre and his legacy is in the very fabric of the building.

Calling all Front of House Managers

Do you fancy being a Front of House Manager?

Through the course of the year here at the Barn we are constantly looking for volunteer Front of House Managers and staff, be it for Friends of the Barn, Oxted Players or Oxted Operatic Society.

It is a fun job, full of responsibility and currently enjoyed by just a few special people. To try to bring together a larger team of FOH managers all with the same outlook and brief we are planning to hold some training sessions for those interested and the first will be held at the Barn on Friday, October 5th starting at 7pm in the bar area.

Please do come along if you are interested and I am sure you will find the role fulfilling once training is complete. If you would like more details then please speak to Bruce or Sheila to find out a little more. We look forward to seeing you there.