

Theatre group still making a dramatic impact

This July, Thame Players celebrates 75 years of serving the community and the arts. From performing a concert in aid of war veterans it has developed into a successful company with its own theatre and is run entirely by volunteers.

The company was established in 1944 and subsequently acquired the freehold to the Players Theatre in 1997. After raising £250,000, a major refurbishment was undertaken in 2002, transforming the former church hall into the modern theatre it is today.

Further refurbishment was completed in 2014 and accessibility to the theatre was dramatically improved.

The theatre continues to be closely involved with the community and many have enjoyed attending performances or being involved in productions. One of their regular volunteers commented, 'The theatre helped me get through a really dark period when my husband was dying. When things at home are grim, you go to the theatre and it takes you

out of yourself - getting involved in a show with other people makes you forget difficult times for a few hours'. Other volunteers have commented on how they found the skills and experience they gained at the theatre helpful in their careers and personal development.

The Players Theatre is the only dedicated theatre in Thame offering a year-round programme of plays, comedy, music and cinema and it regularly fills its 132-seat auditorium.

This July to celebrate their 75th anniversary the company will perform a musical revue entitled 'Landmarks' on Friday 26th and Sunday 28th July, including sketches, narrations, and musical numbers recalling significant milestones in their history. The revue's creators, Tony Long and Bernadette Tildesley, expect it to be especially popular with members and loyal supporters of the company.

Bernadette says, 'Thame Players feel it's important to recognise their history in this way, acknowledging the support of community, local government and businesses,

which has enabled them to achieve their present position as a vibrant, thriving dramatic society and performance venue'.

Tony goes on to say, 'Towards the end, we've included a sketch looking forward to Thame Players' centenary in 2044. Many of our volunteers get a sense of fulfilment from their involvement with the theatre and are motivated to continue expanding its output, range and quality over the coming years'.

The Landmarks revue is being made possible with the help of unpaid volunteers both on and off-stage, including compilers, actors, stage managers, painters, technicians and many others. New volunteers are welcomed as shows like this encompass many abilities, from wardrobe to front of house.

Pat Shepherd, chairman, says, 'Volunteers are always welcome at Thame Players: there are many varied roles they can help with, from set-building, lighting and sound, to acting, publicity and fundraising.'

Visit www.thameplayers.co.uk for more information, contact thameplayers@gmail.com or call 07881 688895.

VOLUNTARY VOICE

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