

VALLEY DRAMATICS

Why it's all been a bit of a drama...

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This year, Stage Two Downham, the amateur dramatics group based at Downham Village Hall, celebrates 25 years of varied and entertaining productions.

The group developed from the Waddington Drama Group in 1989 when its premises in that village became unsuitable. It was a suggestion from a Downham resident, the late Geoff Braithwaite, which led to the village hall in the shadow of Pendle Hill being proposed as the group's new home.

Eileen Clews, a member at Waddington at the time, suggested the name and Stage Two Downham was born.

Bob Cleeve, at that time chairperson of Waddington Drama Group and now treasurer of Stage Two, recalls the events well.

"I was ably supported by the whole group in the somewhat difficult task and did not know how it would affect our loyal audiences. We were made very welcome in Downham and eventually had representation on the village hall committee," he said.

"The 'divorce' from Waddington was traumatic, but after one or two initial hiccups, the 'second marriage' to Downham is going really well and I am sure that we will be having a golden anniversary in another 25 years' time!"

The first production was Alan Ayckbourn's "Round and Round the Garden". Since that time the group has put on 46 productions, ranging from ones by Noel Coward to Ray Cooney and from "When Did You Last See Your Trousers?" to "The Diary of Anne Frank".

Where possible, there has been a Spring and an Autumn production each year. There have been 16 different directors/producers and 155 people have been involved both on stage and backstage.

These have all been people giving up their free time to take part in something they love and, hopefully, to provide entertainment to audiences from the Ribble Valley and beyond.

Indeed an estimate of the total audience numbers in the first 25 years would be 11,500.

Members of the group have also been involved in theatrical events elsewhere. Most notably in May, 1990, members of Stage Two took part in scenes from "The Railway Children" at Oakworth and Oxenhope stations on the Keighley and Worth Val-



The cast of "Flare Path", the latest production from Stage Two Downham.

Below, the poster for Stage Two's current production of Terence Rattigan's wartime drama "Flare Path".



The cast of "Daisy Pulls It Off", performed by Stage Two Downham in 1993.



ley Railway Line. This was organised by Graham Mitchell, a member of Stage Two at the time, who had himself had a small part in the famous Lionel Jeffries' film 25 earlier.

More recently, members of the group have performed dramatic excerpts in the music events at Christ Church, Chatburn, "40s Night" and its Christmas concert.

Stage Two Downham celebrated its 25th anniversary on May 9th at The Grand, Clithe-

roe. Bob Cleeve paid tribute to the members who have passed away. Their enormous contribution, over many years, was recognised with appreciation. This contribution has been, and always will be, sadly missed, he said. The Grand provided a wonderful venue, a three-course meal and much technical support.

The group is flourishing and moving with the times. A new sound system has been purchased and the latest LED

lighting is being installed. There is a Facebook page and a website (www.stage2downham.co.uk).

The efforts of so many enthusiastic people over the years have ensured that the group continues to thrive. New members are always needed, however, and whatever your area of interest – be it on stage, sound, lighting, costume, props, front of house – you can be assured of a warm welcome.

You won't regret it – just call 07833203495.

Jennifer Whiteside, a new member and also part of the vintage close harmony trio the Sparkle Sisters did just that.

"I was thrilled to be invited to join the cast of 'The Ghost Train' last year. It was my first play with Stage 2 and I immediately felt relaxed and at ease with the team," she said.

"It was an absolute pleasure to work alongside such generous and talented actors.

Everyone is very supportive of each other, which provides a great foundation for confident performances to flourish. I am so very proud to have been involved in a production and hope to be a part of the group for years to come."

The current production of Terence Rattigan's World War Two drama "Flare Path" opened last night (Wednesday) and is on until Saturday. Tickets are still available on the hotline 07833203495.

Chocks away



Downham drama group ready for take off with wartime drama
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THE MUSEUM THEATRE
DOWNHAM MARKET SQUARE
DOWNHAM



VALLEY ENTERTAINMENT

Rattigan drama is a very fitting memorial piece

Stage Two lights the way with 'Flare Path'

The presentation of "Flare Path" by Terence Rattigan was a superb choice for performance by the Stage Two theatre group in this special World War memorial year.

Terence Rattigan was a most popular English playwright who served in the RAF in the Second World War. He wrote from life's experiences as he recounted the lives of a group of "Civvy Street" and aircrew personnel who met in The Falcon—a small hotel overlooking a bomber base.

"Flare Path" is a drama which covers a single 24-hour span—overnight into the bargain!

The audience was engaged in re-living the see-saw emotions of the play's characters.

The opportunity to enact an hour or two's wartime emotions of those Rattigan characters presented Stage Two director Fran Osborne and her cast with a splendid chance to recreate a bit of history.

Fran and her team, backstage and front, are to be congratulated upon their sensitive and convincing production.

The close nature of the situations that the cast underwent while playing their individual roles melded the team together to give a memorable, unified performance that held the audience enraptured.

Each player identified with the role so convincingly that Rattigan's war story rolled smoothly forward to tell its tale. Players were word perfect. Stella Barnes (continually) proudly said that her role, behind scenes had proved unnecessary.

The three acts were introduced by soprano Jennifer, who set the nostalgic ambience of fateful 1941 by singing "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square" and two other songs that were inspiring, scene setting melodies and popular big band pieces during the war years.

There was a variety of relationships between the aircrew and their wives at The Falcon, with a hopeful lull in operations during which the couples could spend

precious time together. Dusty Miller (Robert Crane) and his down-to-earth little missus were at the humdrum stage where the reality of their time together overruled any romance they may have known beforehand.

Mrs. Maudie (Lesley Haworth) had been bombed out. She could tell the difference in sound of the engines of "ours" and "theirs" planes.

Lesley's endearing cameo of Maudie was appreciated fully. Her warm, hand-knitted "cardie" added to the humour.

Dusty played a patient supportive character as both husband and aircrew. Lovely! Each of the couples' partnerships were interwoven with both personal and wartime tensions.

Count Skriczewsky (Ken Entwistle) had escaped from Poland, leaving a wife and child who'd been murdered by the Hun. The Count had overcome language and nationality difficulties by the devoted attention of his British wife, Countess Skriczewinsky (Geraldine Heyworth).

Brave Count and Countess—how sensitively acted. The Countess's private worry was that she may not be needed by the Count after the war.

However, during the most touching scene between herself and ex-film star Peter Kyle, (Steve Cooke) her fears of being unloved were put to rest, after Peter translated a letter for her from the Count.

The audience showed its delight as the twosome were reunited after a scare for the Count, who had survived after his plane had pranged and "I fell into ze drink".

Such humour—with such pathos. Lovely!

Talent and acting skills continued within the lovers' triangle of Peter Kyle and his erstwhile actress lover Patricia Warren (Andrea Cawley). Now Mrs. Graham, Pat is married to Flight Lieutenant Teddy, nicknamed Pilot Officer Prune (Chris Bowers).

Hesitatingly, Pat was still fond of both men—and in a disturbingly personal dilemma.

Aging Peter needed her comfort as he became less

active in his theatrical popularity. Their nostalgic recollections were an intriguing sub-plot within the whole drama, but at 5 am pilot Teddy returned from a particularly drastic flight home which had taxed his spirit and his flying capabilities to the limit.

Pat and Teddy played out a truly moving scene in which he broke down and confessed that his fear of flying operations was overwhelming. How much longer could he sustain this responsibility?

Naturally this outcry proved present reality and Pat's decision left Peter Kyle to quietly return into romance land. Pat's place was at her husband's side. Relief!

The single set built by Brian Howarth and Chris Smith, portrayed the reception room of The Falcon.

Mrs. Oakes the hotelier (Sylvia Cullen) kept a strict house and everyone mindful of the shortages of food and domestic help.

Her tight lipped sense of security, fairness to her clients and extra care for the aircrew was impressive and most enjoyable, adding a lighter touch to events.

Squadron Leader Swanson came and went with orders from headquarters. Teddy's crew was needed for flight duty at once. Swanson's brusque announcement cut through everyone's expectations and tensions came into play. Barney Cullen played Squadron Leader "Gloria" with command and understanding.

Young Percy, the barman, played by Leo Burke added happy energy to the mixture. His thoughtful gift of the tall-man Bele proved to be a magic touch for the Countess. Drinks toasts then were "Tinkerty Tonk" rather than "Cheers".

Tom Garner, as Wiggly, provided the finishing touch, playing on his ukelele, as everyone sang "We Don't Want to Join the Air Force".

Thank you all for a memorable production and a suitable memorial for all our wartime loved ones. The realistic sound and lighting effects were hair raising!
Tinkerty Tonk!

MSS