

My Favourite History Place



Charlie Lewis-North introduces us to the Tivoli Theatre, Winbourne.

The Tivoli Theatre opened on 24 August 1936 with Jean Adrienne in *Father O'Flynn* and Shirley Temple in *Kid in Hollywood*, with film star Jean Adrienne appearing in person. It was designed by Bournemouth-based architect E. de Wilde Holding. The front of the building was an existing Georgian-style building named Borough House. Inside the auditorium there was an attractive sequence of multi-coloured lights, concealed in troughs. The Tivoli also boasts a wide variety of Art Deco features, including original chrome and Bakelite door handles.

The theatre had originally been designed to have dressing rooms but that was changed at the last minute and it then operated mainly as the local cinema. Initially an independent cinema, it passed to South Coast Theatres Ltd., then to the Myles Byrne Cinema chain who operated it until its closure in April 1980 with the double feature programme *Convoy* and *Sweeney 2*.

The building was compulsorily purchased by Dorset County Council as part of the preparations for a traffic improvement scheme that was later abandoned. It then sat empty and unused for ten years until in 1990 the Friends of the Tivoli charity was formed. It then took a further three years of hard work to get the building ready to open to the public again.

On 23 November 1993 a production of *Alphabetical Order* was presented on the stage by the Wimborne Festival Theatre Company. Over the years further restoration work has been carried out and films are once again a significant part of the programming, together with live theatre.

In 2002 during a change in management, the theatre built a dressing-room block and also a very practical scene/loading dock. Since then, the theatre has thrived and has been able to present the very latest in modern film.



It also has a good strong reputation within the industry and among some of the top agents and managers and it is one of the best places to see modern comedians (some of whom are big household names). It also boasts a fine live music calendar in addition to local drama and musical theatre groups while being open year round and in recent years has ended the year with a tremendous professional pantomime.

The theatre is staffed by a paid management team and a large troupe of very loyal and helpful volunteers without whom the Tivoli could not survive. At the time of going to print the films showing are *Youth* and *Hail, Caesar!* For more information on the Tivoli visit: www.tivoliwimborne.co.uk/

If you would like to tell us about your history place in a future edition of *The Historian*, in about 700 words, please email: alf.wilkinson@history.org.uk