Mr E Marshall Remembers……

"Before the First World War my Father worked at Cranmore and Simmons as a sheet metal worker and told me about when he helped install the Ventilator in the ceiling of the Palace Theatre. I remember him telling me of one occasion when one of his workmates (after a lunchtime drink) fell into the auditorium. Fortunately, he was not hurt."

Pollyanna Jones Remembers……

"My great-great grandad Birch used to live on George Street, roughly about where the Town Hall now stands.

In the 1920s, the Palace Theatre did not have a piano. Grandad Birch would wheel his upright piano from his house on George Street to the theatre whenever it was needed for performances. After the show, it would be wheeled back again, no matter how late it was."

Anon……

'After the (first) War, the Palace Theatre shows played with the programme changing twice weekly.
There was a mixture of Comedy, Drama, Musicals, Revues, Panto, Opera and Shakespeare Plays, including 'The Arcadia', 'The Belle Of New York' and 'The Quaker Girl'.
Films were also included, with live acts performing during the intervals. Acts like Mr Horace Leighton and Miss Pansy Lindford in the Teeth Trapeze and Dancing Act and Mr William Kingsley on Hand Bells.
There was even a performing Elephant on one occasion, the under stage having been reinforced with Pit Props to take the weight!"

Colin Wheeler Remembers……

"My first memory of visiting the theatre was in 1937 when as a very small child my dad took me to see the Great Levante, an Australian and internationally famous magician and illusionist.

I can remember some of the tricks he performed, including the coin snatch and the sixpenny Woolworth tin kettle trick.. He concluded the show with a spectacular firing of a girl from a cannon situated at the rear left corner of the stage into a net on the front right corner."

Elizabeth-Anne Peart Remembers…

"I remember when I was 3 years old going to the Elsie Siddele School of Dancing (Mrs Biggs) Mrs Foreman played the piano for us and Mrs Latham made all our costumes. This was in 1945 and material was very hard to get, so most of them were made of parachute silk or plastic, but they were beautiful. About twice a year we put on shows at the Palace Theatre. I remember the older dancers, including Mary Clark who later became a Television Topper) and Elsie's son, Howard, who was a superb tap dancer."

Colin Wheeler Remembers……

"Both (Wrestling and Boxing) were presented on the stage of the Palace Theatre by a local builder, Mr Sergeant."

Tommy Thomas Remembers...

"In the 1950s after I won a talent competition I was asked if I would appear each night throughout the following week and promised a part in a forthcoming film.
The week at the Palace theatre simply flew by, and, on the last night Barry Faber and Daffydd Havard, the competition promoters, congratulated me on my performance.
To reassure me of my participation in the forthcoming film they introduced me to a visiting fellow cast member, Anthony Newley, who had not yet met and married Joan Collins. Sadly he studiously ignored me. I never did get the place in the film."

Pearl Taylor Remembers.....

"When the decision was taken to knock down the theatre and build a leisure centre, the members of the local Amateur Societies decided to get up a petition against the closure. The town's people got behind us - and we won, didn't we!
'The theatre was handed to the user societies to run, with the financial backing of business people in the town. I became cleaning co-ordinator and key holder, grouping together the members of amateur societies on Sunday mornings to clean the theatre from top to bottom.
A group of volunteers became the permanent stage crew for ten years, headed by Trevor Farmer as Stage Manager, we worked 52 weeks of the year on every show, just for the love of the Palace Theatre."

Colin Wheeler Remembers…….

"During Jack Leuty's tenure a cafe was introduced in a small room off the stairway to the circle. It was run by Bert Maries, who had a sweet shop directly across the road (from where Rilys now stands)."

Peter Harris Remembers…..

"I remember skating at the Palace. After donning one's boots it was onto the rink and the first wobbly steps and falls. It wasn't long before one became a natural and joined the Formula One skaters who seemed to go round and round at breakneck speed. The occasional Torvill and Dean would attempt a few obscure movements only to be knocked flying by hordes of teenage maniacs."

Colin Wheeler Remembers…….

"Many years ago, long before the scourge of political correctness entered our society, Midget Town, came to the Palace. I recall my late father recounting a tiny lady announcing to the audience that she had willed herself to the stage and invited any man to come up on stage and she offered £5, a large sum in those days, to any man who could lift her from the floor, none could."

Pearl Taylor Remembers.....

"The theatre has a ghost whom I have never seen, but have felt his presence like a blast of cold air when alone in the dressing room corridor."

Bob Taylor Remembers.....

"I joined ROS (Redditch Operatic Society) in 1971. Until the Council brought the factory next door and gave it to us to turn into dressing rooms, the problem was finding room for a mixed chorus of about 40 to change. We draped a rope across the scene dock, put an old black cloth on it, ladies on one side, men on the other. On one occasion the dancing girls were put in the boiler room downstairs and during the show they were affected by fumes and had to be given first aid and moved upstairs."

Peter Harris Remembers....

"The Palace, situated on Alcester Street down past the Select was pure luxury after the other cinemas. Plush seats, a raked floor and exotic decoration. I remember going to see the last film showed there. I think it was The Snows of Kilimanjaro, starring Gregory peck, Susan Hayward and Ava Gardner. The Palace always seemed to have the blockbusters of the day. I recall seeing 'Trapeze' starring Burt Lancaster, Tony Curtis and Gina Lollobrigida. For weeks afterwards we were all pretending to do triple somersaults off an imaginary trapeze. We usually took a rain check on the interval ice cream as it was more expensive than up the road, and they had thicker chocolate on the choc ices."

John Tremelling Remembers……

"In the 1980s I embarked on a quest to interview various individuals who had a history of involvement in the theatre and travelled the length and breath of the country interviewing and making voice recordings of their memories. Some of those recordings included those of Jack Leuty who in the 1950s brought the Kendall's to the Palace as artists in residence, Mavis Bennett as a little girl recalled 'hanging around by the Palace Stage Door listening to the magical sounds of the theatre, this inspired her to become one of the most revered singers of her time. Lillian Beale (was) a lady who had a lifetime involvement (in the Palace) from the day it first opened its doors. She played the piano for some of the silent movies and accompanied many a soloist, including myself, who performed at the theatre."

Tim Mackrill Remembers……

"I joined as Technical Manager in August 2002 so I could work on the rebuild project and was lucky to work with a wonderful team of people. I was able to specify what we needed as a client and re design and install all of the technical services on the main stage, including sound systems, lighting control etc. At one point during the project you could stand in the basement and look at the ceiling that is now in the office on the top floor! The project ran over and we had to kit out the building whilst walls were still being plastered. The official hand over of keys was the day before our first show! It took a lot of planning but we did it….."

Bob Taylor Remembers……..

"My first show at the Palace was a concert with the Redditch Youth Club Choir in the early 1950s. Also at that time I remember standing at the back of the auditorium at Sunday nights Big Band shows featuring bands like Sid Phillips, Ivy Benson's All Girl Band, the Squadronaires and many more."

Dave Wilkins Remembers……

"Peter Pan was the first Pantomime where I worked as a full time member of the stage crew having retired from the police and apart from moving rather heavy scenery, I had another important job - flying Peter Pan! It took two of us on each line to hoist and control the flying across the stage and back, tricky, as we were in a very tight space in the wings (Wendy had to fly as well)! I was also responsible for clipping on the lines to Peter's belt. All I will say is that he only fell off once - and it really was not my fault! - the costume got caught between the clip and the ring on the belt. He got up and the show went on.. Since 2006 I have been working on the 'Follow Spot' instead!!!!"

Lynda Baker (nee Cash) Remembers….

"In 1971 when the Palace reopened, it was decided local Amdram groups would provide their own Front of House and back stage staff. I was 17 at the time…..one of the architects who worked on the renovation was also a member of our group and he asked my friend Dawn and myself if we would like to work FOH for professional shows we went along on the first show which I recall was Julie Felix. I stayed and remained a volunteer for 34 years until the refurbishment in 2005."

Pam Day Remembers…….

"Mr Leuty greeted everyone at every performance, dressed in a black suit during the day and a tuxedo at night. Mrs Leuty sold the tickets and was usually dressed in evening dress and jewels for the evening performance."

Pam Day Remembers…….

"Many local people also performed on the stage. Every year a local dance teacher - Elsie Siddele Downing, wife of Mr Biggs the greengrocer, put on a show to show off the talents of all her pupils.
Many Redditch entertainers were included in the shows, such as Cliff Field, Jess Yoxall, Colin Wheeler, John Emms, Joe Brennan and Eddie Crumpton among them."

Colin Wheeler Remembers……

"The area occupied by the gents' toilets, box office, bar and top floor meeting room was Hewston's clothes shop and living accommodation."

Colin Wheeler Remembers……

"I was first involved as a performer at the age of 14 in 1944 and appeared as a tap dancer in the "Show of Show's" Company. This was the Elsie Siddele Downing's Redditch Stage School. During the 1940s she presented a week long show every August and an original pantomime, written by her, every January."

Tommy Thomas Remembers.

"In the 1950s Barry Faber and Daffydd Havard were hosting a talent competition at the Palace Theatre and I was asked to participate in it. The competition took place on Friday and the winner would be given a part in a forthcoming film, I was shaking like a leaf as I stepped out on to the stage and launched into my routine with a somewhat wobbly start but to my utter amazement, and my parents delight, I emerged as the winner.

I was then invited backstage and asked if I would appear each night throughout the following week, free gratis, of course, these two gentlemen realised the advantage of having a local hero on their show."

Colin Wheeler Remembers.....

"In the late 1930's, during the winter months circus acts would frequently appear in the theatres and once, when I was present, a lion was led onto the stage on a lead and he ate a joint of meat off a scantily clad dressed girl's chest whilst she was lying on the front of the stage."

Mr E Marshall Remembers.....

"I remember seeing The Blue Rockers Dance Band and the Great Levant (Magician) among many other shows during the Forties."