

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release – 12/11/2019

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Internationally awardwinning Brixham-based theatre company launches new production, about Brixham's maritime history

The Show

The Great Gale of Brixham 1866, a two hour, family-friendly production, brings to life a pivotal historical event in Brixham. The show dramatizes the historical night and its aftermath, as well as delving into some of the other local stories of the town that are believed to have happened within the 19th Century. The Great Gale of Brixham 1866, was carefully researched from original newspaper sources, local stories and oral history from local families, written by the South Devon Players company founder, Laura Jury, a long term resident of Brixham. While it can only provide a snapshot of the events of the night, it brings to life one of the big historical events of the town, in a two hour production.

Performed by a professional cast of locally based professional actors,

The Players last production; William Shakespeare's Macbeth, won an international award in the Long Island Theatre Awards, in New York, in June 2019.

The first performances of the show, at Brixham Theatre, on December 13th and 14th 2019, are performed in one of the towns buildings still linked to the storm – many surviving sailors rescued from the multiple shipwrecks were brought to the town hall (now the modern day Theatre and the Scala Hall) which acted as emergency accommodation.

The South Devon Players, founded in 2005/6 on the proceeds of a carboot sale, are winners of the national Epic Award 2017 for England, a national arts award celebrating creativity and innovation in grassroots arts, and now the 2019 Long Island Theatre Awards "Theatre Partner" award in New York. Based in Brixham, the Players primarily specialise in researched historical theatre productions and old "Classics".

The history:

On the night of January 10 – 11th 1866, a southeast gale blew up, and the storm is widely remembered in Brixham to this day. Much of the towns fishing fleet, as well as other ships sheltering in Torbay were destroyed, with a large loss of life.

The fishwives of Brixham built a bonfire of their household effects on the end of the breakwater (half the length of the current breakwater, although in the same location) to try to guide their husbands home safely, while the men on shore in the town did all they could to save people from the ships which were wrecked along the Brixham and Churston coastline, and all those saved, both locals, and those from other parts of Britain, and indeed mainland Europe, were shown great kindness by the residents of the town who in many cases offered them lodgings in their own

homes, even as they waited for news of their own loved ones.

It is said, however, that after the storm one could walk along the coastline from Brixham to Paignton, upon the wreckage of all the wrecked ships. Over a hundred bodies were identified, and records to this day also list many other unidentified seamen who were found torn apart by the fury of the storm and unidentifiable. A mass grave and memorial exists at St Marys Church in Brixham to this day. The full death toll from the storm will never be known – for example it was reported that two passenger steamers had been seen in Torbay, and some sailors, later rescued from the wreck of their own ship, reported that in the chaos of the night, in the bay, their ship had crashed into an unknown steamer which then sank, as far as they knew, with all hands.

In the 19th century, at the time of this storm, Brixham was one of the foremost fishing ports in England, and it was due to this storm that the people of Exeter, the county capital, raised funds for Brixham to have her first RNLI lifeboat; named The City Of Exeter, and the town has always had a lifeboat since.

The show dates are:

Brixham Theatre

Friday December 13th 2019 - 7.30pm

Saturday December 14th 2019 - 2.30pm & 7.30pm

Brixham Theatre
New Road/ Bolton Cross
Brixham
Devon TQ5 8TA

The Watermark Theatre, Ivybridge

January 18th 2020 - 7.30pm

The Watermark, Erme Court,
Leonards Rd,
Ivybridge
Devon PL21 0SZ

CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION OR FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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Attachments: show posters for both venues
and promotional images (actor name _ character name)