

Press release

Hundreds turn out for opening of extraordinary Living Willow Theatre

Overflow car parking was needed to support the astounding 300 visitors who turned out for the opening of a unique Living Willow Theatre in Llanwrthwl near Rhayader on Sunday 22nd April. The ribbon was cut and the theatre officially opened by Clive Swift, Kirsty Williams AM and Roger Williams MP. Clive is a great Classical actor well known for his starring performance as Richard Bucket of the long running sit com 'Keeping up Appearances'.

The launch of this theatre, which was featured on a recent BBC Radio Wales programme, was a fabulous days entertainment and included a striking medley of work directed by Shakespeare Link including a seven-minute Macbeth extravaganza from Builth Primary School, readings and performances from the Have-a-go Shakespeare group, short scenes from Mid-Powys Youth Theatre, and a hilarious puppet show from Builth Wells Community Arts. Actresses Kama Roberts and Naomi Doyle of Theatre Powys added a professional dash to proceedings with a scene from Twelfth Night. The day was linked and supported by a 14-piece band, singing and much merriment. The astounding success of the day laid a precedent for a stunning programme of community and professional performances planned in coming months.

This landmark venue is believed to be the only structure of it's kind in use as a performance space in the country and possibly the world. Planting was done a year ago by willow expert Dr Rebecca Heaton and a group of volunteers. It has been modelled on the footprint of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London, being a third of its size in diameter.

The theatre is at the heart of what has become the Mid-Wales Shakespeare Centre which, aside from a performance space welcoming a wide range of arts happenings, offers a new Shakespeare and Welsh History reference library, a Shakespearean Hay Meadow and a Herb Garden which will include many species found in his plays. These facilities as well as Shakespeare workshops and practical farm tours form an invaluable resource for the area. Clive Swift said 'What Shakespeare Link have created here is an extraordinary, beautiful, sociologically important, theatre-space and educational facility' and isn't that true!