

## THE TITFIELD THUNDERBOLT

Westhoughton Methodist Amateur Dramatic Society will be presenting the comedy play, **The Titfield Thunderbolt** by Philip Goulding, based on the original Ealing Comedy screenplay by T.E.B. Clarke, on Friday 15th and Saturday 16th May.

The branch line from Titfield to Mallingford is being axed, and a group of villagers decide to buy and run the line themselves. The Rev. Sam Weech, a lifelong railway enthusiast, and Squire Chesterford, whose great-grandfather built the line, will need to persuade Mr Valentine, a retired businessman, to provide the necessary funding. Expertise in railway operation could come from Dan, a retired platelayer who lives in a converted railway carriage, but he seems more interested in poaching. The town clerk, Mr Blakeworth, is concerned about the safety aspects of an amateur run railway. More serious opposition is likely from Vernon Crump who wants to make money providing a replacement bus service using his second-hand bus. Who knows what Vernon will do to get his own way? The arguments for and against drive a wedge between Harry Crump, Vernon's son and steam roller owner, and his sweetheart Joan, the vicar's niece, who serves behind the bar in the local pub. Romance and other aspects of village life are all put on hold until the results of the public inquiry and inspection by the Ministry of Transport officials are known.

Most amateur dramatic societies enjoy a challenge with their productions. Staging 'The Titfield Thunderbolt' is particularly daunting as it involves large special effects such as a branch line steam locomotive, a steamroller, a 1923 Morris convertible, a Bedford OB bus and a 1838 Liverpool and Manchester Railway steam locomotive. The locomotive 'Lion', which played the part of the 'Thunderbolt' in the film, is on display in the Museum of Liverpool but is no longer in working order, so our props department have had to work out how to build a replica and create the other effects.

'The Titfield Thunderbolt' is based on the film released in 1953, one of a number of successful comedies produced by the Ealing Studios, and the first one to be shot in colour. The film was made on the Camerton Branch line near Bath which had closed in 1951 but was reopened for filming. The story is fictitious but uses incidents from the early days of volunteer enthusiasts running the narrow gauge Tallylyn Railway in North Wales. It provided inspiration to the many groups of enthusiasts who look after and run steam railways, museums and stations across the UK.

'The Titfield Thunderbolt' is set in various locations in Titfield; the station, the vicarage, the pub and the village hall. The rivalry between the railway and the bus factions involves the audience as they make three journeys to Mallingford by train or bus. Will the traditional way of life in Titfield be preserved along with the railway? Or will it be swept away on a tide of modernisation carried by the bus and other road transport? Westhoughton Methodist ADS are already getting steam up for an entertaining evening of comedy, romance, nostalgia, rivalry and unexpected happenings.

Directed by Bill Greenhalgh. Production presented by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD

'The Titfield Thunderbolt' is suitable for all ages.

Performance dates are Friday 15th and Saturday 16th May. Curtain Up is 7.30pm prompt. Tickets are £5 for Adults and £4.50 for OAPs and Concessions including refreshments.

Tickets are available from the Church Hall from 10 am to 12 noon on Saturday mornings or can be booked by phoning 01942 811051 or by sending an e-mail to: [wmads@f2s.com](mailto:wmads@f2s.com).

All performances will be held at:

Westhoughton Methodist Church Hall, Wigan Road, Westhoughton BL5 3RQ