



ALL SMILES: Sam Straker and Lizzie Heward on stage at Whorlton Village Hall Pictures: Helen Brown



WHAT LIES BENEATH: From left, Ben Pearson, Mike Steinbock, Libby Harding, Sam Straker and Sam Phillipson

Perfect setting for Players' latest show

THE Castle Players completed a run of sell-out shows with their take on the Charles Morgan Second World War escape drama, *The River Line*.

It is the latest in a long line of shows the group has brought to life over the years, ranging from classics such as *Pride and Prejudice* to the many Shakespeare adaptations.

This time, Sam Straker took the limelight as Philip Sturgess, with the experienced actor Ben

Review

Pearson in the supporting role of Commander Julian Wyburton.

The River Line began life as a novel in the 1940s, before being adapted for the stage by Morgan in 1952.

Act one begins at Wyburton's Gloucestershire farmhouse in July 1947, with Sturgess and Wyburton, who are accompanied by Marie Chassigne (Libby Harding).



CURTAIN CALL: The full cast. back row, from left, Sam Phillipson, Mike Steinbock, Nic Worsnop, Libby Harding, Ben Pearson and Johnny Hatch. Front Lizzie Heward and Sam Straker

It quickly becomes apparent they share a past together with secrets below the surface.

Pearson will rightly take the plaudits for his portrayal of Warburton, but he was backed up impressively by his fellow thespians.

The blanks begin to be filled in during act two, as we are transported back to a safe house in war times,

where the group are joined by Major John Lang, referred by the nickname, Heron (Johnny Hatch).

The play then comes to a conclusion, back in the original scene in 1947 where Wyburton and the protagonists probe questions of responsibility and blame following a death.

They are again joined in the final act by Chassigne,

as well as Straker's would be wife, Valerie Barton (Lizzy Heward).

The evening, which was staged at Whorlton Village Hall, was full of bursting with approximately 80 in attendance. The experienced cast handled a dialogue that was diverse and complex throughout. It was certainly a deep and intense narrative, but they managed to lighten

the mood with some slightly more relaxed moments.

With a maximum of only five actors on stage at one time, the setting of the village hall worked well to emphasise the intimacy of the play.

Castle Players will next be in action in November with their portrayal of Dickon, a play about Richard III.

Sam Alexander