

Mayflower plays host to star-studded night for James Shears and Alan Bannon memorial fund

Comedians pay tribute to firefighters

By Sally Churchward
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MORE than 1,800 people packed The Mayflower last night for the All Star Tribute Evening in Aid of the James Shears and Alan Bannon Memorial Fund.

It was a near-capacity audience made up of family, friends and colleagues of the firefighters who tragically lost their lives in the line of duty as well as strangers from Southampton and beyond who wanted to pay tribute to the men.

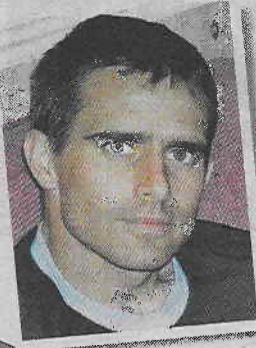
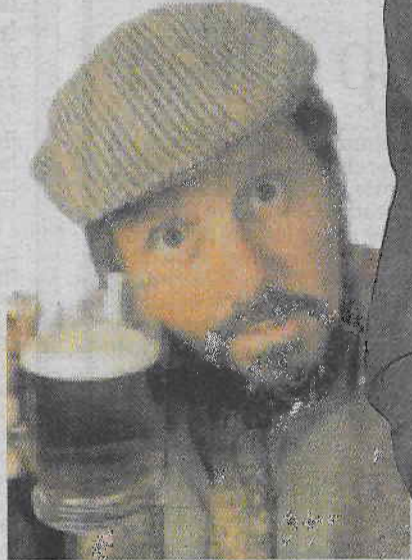
The firefighters from Red Watch at St Mary's Fire Station died in a blaze at Shirley Towers which started on April 6.

Both their widows - Charlotte Bannon and Carla Shears - were set to be at the show along with other family members.

Before the show Southampton comedian Mike Osman said: "We hope to provide a bit of light relief in a really terrible time for the families. It's a show that makes people feel good for a couple of hours and hopefully it will let them get away from their pain for a little bit."

Comedian Jim Davidson, who put the show together, opened the evening by say-

RIGHT: Jim Davidson, Below, Jethro, and below right, Bobby Davro.



Left, James Shears, below, Alan Bannon.



YOU can donate to the fund set up to help the firefighters' families by taking cash or cheques, made payable to the James Shears, above left, and Alan Bannon Memorial Fund, to your local fire station. Those using Internet banking or paying in at The Co-op can transfer money into Unity Trust Bank, sort code 08-60-01, account number 20111678.

ing: "You all know why we are here so give yourselves a clap for supporting this wonderful event."

He added that the artists as well as The Mayflower had given their services for free, saying: "That's why this is the best theatre in the country."

There were some poignant moments including when Bobby Davro sang Hey Jude, which brought some audience members to tears.

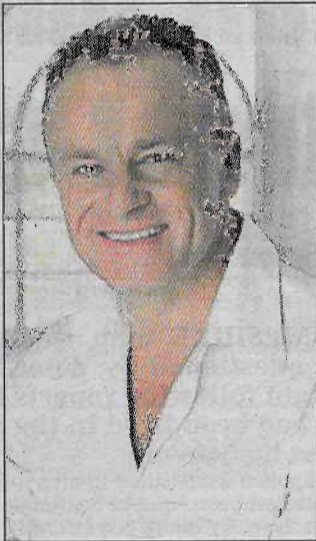
There were also plenty of laughs courtesy of the likes of Jethro, Kev Orkian,

Southampton lad Mike Osman and Davidson himself.

Entertainment was also provided by dance troupe The Jade Millington Performers.

Southampton footballing legend Laurie McMenemy also took to the stage bringing best wishes from everyone in the sporting world for the fire brigade "lads and lasses" for the work they do in this area.

Tickets were priced from £18.50 to £35 per person and although the amount of money raised for the memorial fund hasn't been confirmed, Bobby Davro thanked the audience for raising so much money.



Audiences at The Mayflower were met with the sight of fire appliances outside the theatre. This was not for effect but was because there were a number of crews in the audience who had to break from watching the show to go out to attend the calls.

Shelley ready to get back after 90mph escape



"I am shaken but not stirred."

That is the defiant message from Southampton powerboat champion Shelley Jory-Leigh who is determined to get back on the water after her miraculous escape from a 90mph accident.

The 39-year-old sportswoman lost control of her powerboat during a world championship race in Malta. The impact catapulted her co-pilot 100ft into the sea and flung her back and forth the boat like a "rag doll" but Shelley wanted to get out in The Solent this weekend - just days after her accident.

But Shelley's husband Trevor has told her to stay on dry land to recover from the serious bruises and whiplash.

Shelley, who has even been back to work at the bridal shop she runs in Southampton,

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said: "I would go out tomorrow if I could but my husband has told me to keep on dry land and relax. The sea is a very dangerous place and it has a complete mind of its own but I am not afraid of it at all. I am more interested about me getting it right."

The pressure will be on for the racing duo Shelley and throttle man Patrick Huybrechts because they will not be able to practise in the powerboat until one day before their big race in Sardinia next month.

The boat needs to go back to the factory in Belgium to be checked over for damage.

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