

# The true founders of Maynardville

From Mrs L C THOMP-  
SON, for the commit-  
tee of the Athlone  
Group for Nursery  
Education (1950):

I HAVE read Mr R M  
Friedlander's letter (No-  
vember 27) with great in-  
terest. He seems  
however, to have missed  
the point of contention.

Whilst the accomplish-  
ments of René Ahrenson  
and Cecilia Sonnenberg  
are not in dispute and no  
doubt they may be enti-  
tled to a plaque com-  
memorating the 25th  
anniversary of the estab-  
lishment of the Shakes-  
pearian season at  
Maynardville, they were  
not the founders of the  
open-air theatre there,  
and it is in this respect  
that the wording of the  
plaque is historically in-  
correct.

When the property was  
purchased by the City  
Council, it was mooted  
the site be used to build a  
new town hall, a library, a  
clinic, office blocks, etc.  
It was only the foresight  
of our committee and  
their successful ballet  
performances that helped  
to change the council's

thinking.

A ballet performance  
took place on December  
1, 1950, by the UCT Ballet  
Company under the direc-  
tion of Dulcie Howes and  
accompanied by a 40-  
piece orchestra conduct-  
ed by Erik Chisholm, of  
"Les Sylphides", "St Val-  
entine's Night" and "Les  
Diversions" in its sylvan  
setting more or less in the  
same area as the site of  
the present stage and  
was the forerunner of the  
subsequent ballets in  
1951 and 1952, which were  
most successful and ap-  
plauded by large audi-  
ences. A special floor was  
constructed by the firm  
Arderne Scott Timbers  
Limited for the use of  
these performances.

The records prove with-  
out a shadow of a doubt  
that the open-air theatre  
at Maynardville was  
founded in 1950 by the  
committee of the Athlone  
Group for Non-European  
Nursery School Educa-  
tion. Subsequent perfor-  
mances and/or improve-  
ments after that date have  
no bearing on this fact.

There is no doubt that  
the plaque is incorrect  
and should be amended.

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