

## GRAHAM NORTON signs up for FTA

Joining the ever-growing list of celebrities backing Farnham Theatre Association's campaign to bring a real professional theatre back to the town, Graham Norton has placed his signature firmly 'centre stage' on a framed playbill for the rave London production of *La Cage aux Folles* currently showing at the Playhouse Theatre.

**This will be up for sale in John Nicholson's Auction Rooms at Longfield, Midhurst Road, Fernhurst, Haslemere GU27 3HA on 9 July.** FTA Chairman, Anne Cooper, is thrilled at the prospect of raising a sum well into three figures, the selling price forecast for this highly desirable item of celebrity memorabilia, and extremely grateful to John Nicholson for his generous offer to forgo commission, as a further boost to FTA campaign funds.

As the sale is expected to be of major interest to Graham Norton's legion of devoted fans, a message will be posted on the Fan Club website to alert them to the auction. FTA members will be there to cheer them on!



Abigail McKern with cast-autographed poster

## Waverley and that elusive Cultural Strategy

Residents were promised **Consultation** on this Cultural Strategy from Waverley Borough Council – that clearly implied an opportunity to be involved, to put forward a point of view, to feel that the Council were genuinely listening. But now it's just for Communication on Waverley's website.

Ah, the ways of Waverley.

Replying to a question on this subject from Anne Cooper, Cllr. Roger Steel, Portfolio Holder for Leisure said that consultation had already taken place with the 'concerned organisations' and that at some unidentified time in the future "there will be a further public consultation arranged on the Core Strategy once it had been progressed."

So WBC clearly just want to go their own sweet way disregarding what residents might want or might feel they would like to contribute to this debate. What takes the place of **Consultation** (let's remember that's a two way process)? Yes, it's **Communication** (a one-way process) where WBC speaks and trusts the residents might be listening.

### FTA Response

FTA adamantly counters Roger Steel's response because the consultation did not occur between the Council and the Public. The consultation was between WBC and the recipients of their funding grants - not the audiences. The public has **not** been asked whether they are satisfied with Waverley's Leisure provision.

**The fundamentals of any qualified market research are being blatantly ignored by the Council who should discuss with Customers and not existing Providers.**

## The Waverley Borough Council approach to Conservation

The Brightwell Bowls Clubhouse before and after WBC's intervention



Before



After

The Brightwells Bowling Club was healthy and active; it was a valuable and prized local amenity. The club did not need to be ousted by the council, as the East Street site is dormant. Since then, the clubhouse should not have been allowed to fall into disrepair and become the subject for vandalism. It should not have been demolished. Look at what WBC have left us.

## Jeremy Hunt MP's Public Meeting

In answer to a question about the Redgrave from the floor, Jeremy said that he had identified a lack of theatre provision in Farnham and that he had previously set up a group to look into it and which had met once (Feb. 2008). Jeremy has now been asked for a second meeting of this group. Independently FTA already has arranged to meet the MP in September.

### Fairs , fetes and carnivals - **HELP NEEDED**

**We will be out again this summer at events in Farnham on the fundraising trail. We have another Big Quiz with a £50 cash prize, this time on a TV theme, which is already proving as popular as last year's Film and Theatre quizzes and we also have a raffle already with some great prizes, tickets for some superb London theatre performances, but still need more.**

- The Farnham Carnival in Castle Street on 27 June from 12 to 5pm
- The Hale Carnival at Hale Recreation Ground, 2 to 5pm, 5 July
- The Bourne Show on the Bourne Green, 2 to 5pm, 18 July.

***Can you donate a bottle of wine or perhaps an unwanted gift for our raffle? That would be much appreciated and will help enormously in creating continuing funds. If you are able to help, please call Celia on 01252 726420.***

### New Fundraising Leaflet and Posters

As part of these activities we have our new fundraising leaflet and posters to support the cause. Look out for them! If you would like copies to distribute please contact the Chairman, address below.



### Crest Nicholson and East Street

On being specifically asked, Crest Nicholson recently confirmed their bullish stance on East Street, re-affirmed their financial stability and expressed confidence in expecting plans to be announced in April this year. Well, they weren't - and May went past too, with no announcement. We wait to see....

### Plus ca change... analogies, anyone?

#### Surprising news from 'Edwardian Farnham' written in 1905 by Ewbank Smith!

'With cool effrontery some miserable mountebank by the name of Arthur West opened up what he called The Royalty Theatre under their [the Council's] very noses in South Street without their permission. West opened 11 September with a play called *The Zingara Queen* to a full house. The 'Theatre' was a wooden-sided building, 28 feet by 8 and a half, with a canvas roof; it held 300 people. Its fire risk was increased by thirty gas lights. The Councillors were astonished. West had violated bye-law No 93 by not submitting planning application; under No 11, he had erected a building constructed of materials contrary to requirements, and he had omitted to seek a licence under section 11 of the Theatres Act 1843. Right under their very noses! That is why the Councillors were astonished.

They marched him before the bench, of course, where West was fined 5/- for having no licence, and 20/- for not complying with the bye-laws. It was thought that this rough treatment would cause West to fold his tents and silently steal away. He didn't. For one thing, as Cass remarked at the November meeting, the publicity had boosted trade and The Royalty Theatre was still very much in business. West even sent in a memorial signed by twenty-nine of his patrons praying that he be allowed to remain. The Councillors gave him 10 days to get out.

#### And Now...

Just over 100 years later, it's intriguing to note that Farnham Rep continues to use a marquee in which to present its summer season, and this year it's to be located in Brightwell Garden, just off South Street. A strange analogy?



Farnham Rep has to operate there, of necessity, in the absence of a usable theatre in this town...except for the Redgrave, sitting unloved by Waverley Council, just a few metres away and closed to the public by WBC.

At least Farnham Rep obtains licences and obeys the law, unlike Mr. West in 1905. And unlike Mr. West, Farnham Rep isn't going away!



You may already have heard that Farnham Rep is the more informal name for the New Farnham Repertory Actors' Company which they'll be using for their productions from now on.

However the company's ethos is unchanged which is to bring professional productions to Farnham throughout the Summer Season. Along with the new name they have a contemporary and distinctive new logo.

This Summer's season includes **Charles Dickens' *Hard Times***, adapted by **Stephen Jeffreys**, the premiere of ***Room Service*** by **Moya O'Shea**, ***Quartermaine's Terms*** by **Simon Gray** and ***Sunday Specials*** featuring **Rosie Ashe**, **Elizabeth Counsell**, **Roy Hudd**, **Simon MacCorkindale**, and **Kevin Moore**.

See their website for fuller details.  
[www.farnhamrep.co.uk](http://www.farnhamrep.co.uk)

### East Street/Easy Street

We're delighted to report that the article under this heading in the last Newsletter was taken up by The Farnham Diary and reprinted in full.

It also led on to a further article about the transfer of substantial funds to WBC with the expressly stated purpose of effecting maintenance work on The Redgrave when they took over the building many years ago. However the Council used not one penny of these funds, allowing the theatre and Grade II listed Brightwell House to decline.

### Another example of the WBC approach to Conservation.

### UCA Discussions



FTA continues in discussion with UCA and talks are developing; there is genuine interest and commitment to explore the situation from both parties. However, because UCA have undergone a restructuring this has deferred any potential progress although they are keen to reconvene with us at a later date.

### Limelight 3000



Grassroots funding under the name Limelight 3000, from Surrey Community Foundation has been performing well by helping FTA spread its light across Farnham and beyond.

Behind the scenes FTA is developing its website which is increasingly gaining in appeal to a growing audience – receiving over 22,000 hits since Limelight 3000 began late last year.

Throwing light onto 'Grassroots' has also sprouted another welcomed shoot of matched funding for FTA, enabling us to leverage in five 'donated - SFDC Foundation, Relationship Management user licences' via Community Associates. With a total licence value to FTA of £5,100 per annum - or £25,500 over the next five years – we hope to help our

community supporters reap the rewards of Surrey Community Foundations grants and SFDC Foundation's donation in the near future.

Limelight 3000 is also supporting FTA to register as a charity which will bring in the added benefit of Gift Aid for supporters and FTA.

### Facebook for FTA

We now have our own place on Facebook which is to be updated very soon. Right now it's an embryo site and you can see it by going to Save Farnham Theatre. The intention is of course to reach new supporters through this medium.

# The Message of the Wooden O - Recent Discoveries

By John Price

**'The flat unraised spirits that have dared on this unworthy scaffold to bring forth so great an object: can this cockpit hold the vasty fields of France? Or may we cram within this wooden O the very casques that did affright the air at Agincourt?'**

Imagine a story that starts back in 1576 and ends up in 2009 with the Government wanting Shakespeare to be taught to 5-15 year olds and two theatre companies fighting for a building site in Shoreditch, London. Now, many see Shakespeare as not relevant but a love of his work began for me with Olivier's film, *Henry V* with William Walton's marvellous score; the beginning of the film with a reconstruction of the Globe Theatre constructed in Southwark – the wooden O.

The more recent film *Shakespeare in Love* also provides a good example of an Elizabethan playhouse. It seems that the site of THE THEATRE, as it was called, on the north side of the Thames where Shakespeare learnt his craft and wrote his early plays such as *Romeo and Juliet*, has been excavated and identified by archaeologists.

The small part of THE THEATRE discovered in 2008 provides the brick foundations and evidence of how it was built as an octagon with large timbers. It was found on a site north of Liverpool Street Station. However, most of the original site lies under present day buildings and although the exact location was lost for hundreds of years, a plaque had been put up in the area by Hackney Council.

THE THEATRE was built by James Burbage in 1576 but because of decrees by the Lord Mayor, theatres were banned from the City and had to be built outside the walls.

THE THEATRE, being the first purpose built outdoor theatre in London, lasted for 21 years.

When James Burbage died in 1597 there were legal disputes with the landowner and with an expiring lease. His two sons Cuthbert and Richard, with the help of a carpenter, Peter Street, arranged to dismantle the large timbers in 1598 and take them across the river to Bankside where they constructed the famous GLOBE.

Dimensions taken from the recently discovered THEATRE may help in providing further information on the size of the GLOBE. Why were archaeologists doing their stuff?

Well, it was initiated by plans from the 78 year old 'Tower Theatre' company to build a small brand new theatre on the vacant site, and who had raised funding to purchase it and were liaising with Camden Council and English Heritage.

The situation has been recently complicated by the decision of the professional 'Big Space Theatre Productions' company, founded in 1993, also planning a permanent home in a new state-of-the-art theatre on nearby disused land close by. Both companies want to call their new building 'THE THEATRE'. Whether funding becomes available will be interesting to see.

If Government wants children to know more about Shakespeare perhaps it could help to fund 'baby' Globes as these structures could prove more interesting and exciting for them. There is plenty of oak near Farnham for one in the town.

John Price (abridged from a longer article)

## For your Diary - AGM

**The Association hopes to hold the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING on the afternoon of Saturday 24th October at the United Reformed Church Hall in South Street, Farnham (opposite Sainsbury's). Further details in next Newsletter.**



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