

A Tale of Two Theatres: told by those who knew

Dear Anne,

I wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed reading the book; it is a lovely blend of history and theatre people, and makes an excellent memorial to the two theatres. Well done to all the team, Pam Taylor (Chairman F&DMS) 20.03.20

Hello Anne,

I've read your lovely book cover to cover and enjoyed every word. For a start, it's such an attractive-looking publication, every page well laid out and plenty of good clear illustrations. Then you tell the story so well. I love the way you incorporate different peoples' memories into your narrative so smoothly, the various voices adding valuable colour. I particularly enjoyed reading Vicky King's contributions: she came to some of my Adult Fd literature classes and always gave excellent value in discussions as you can imagine!

Besides being an enjoyable and nostalgic read, it's also a valuable contribution to Farnham's history and I appreciate your meticulous footnotes, acknowledgements and indexing. They're such a pain to do but so helpful to future researchers and historians!

So hearty congratulations to you and to David. It was so kind of him to deliver my copy personally. It's just a pity that the story, after all your years of tireless hard work and campaigning, had such a sad ending!

All best wishes,

Rosemary 14.03.20 (local author and historian) -

Hi Anne

I thought I'd write to let you know how very much I am enjoying your book. It's so welcome, not only that you have made a permanent record of our local theatrical history, but because the collection of personal accounts and reminiscences makes it a true, unchallengeable record, and that in turn means it is, hopefully, protected from allegations of political bias.

You must have spent an unbelievable amount of time to put it together. Just selecting which material to use must have been a headache! And it is so elegantly presented.

You have stirred many memories.

Wishing you every good wish,

Nigel 28.03.2020 (Volunteer with NFERC and rtd. Hants. Education officer)

(Reviews Continued...)

Dear Anne, 25 March 2020

Thank you for having the book delivered to my home address. It is absolutely marvellous and I am enjoying reading it as it brings back many happy memories of the Castle Theatre. And, as if I could forget, thank you and everyone else for providing such a memorable event in the Farnham Council Chamber. It was a marvellous occasion and one which Geoff and I will always remember.

It was lovely to see you and talk with you again, and also with David.

Best wishes to you both,

Mary (Mary Hunt ex WBC and FTC Councillor)

Dear Anne,

16 March 2020

Reading the book, I was amazed at the number of truly successful actors and actresses who began their careers or played in their early days at Farnham. It is tribute to the Farnham Rep that it was so highly regarded by actors and agents. If there were no other proof of the success of the Redgrave this would be sufficient.

I found myself writing the other day that no theatre project can have a chance of surviving without the support of its local authority. Sadly, an antagonistic local authority can destroy a theatre or stop a new one long before it has come to fruition. With emptying High Streets and town centres one hopes that this will change but it will be over the dead body of many councillors who will with equanimity fund sports to a far higher level. 'Physical sport good: intellectual sport bad' - it has a 1984 ring to it.

One enduring thought, the Castle opened with Shaw's *You Never Can Tell* and I opened the Lyric Theatre Hammersmith with the same play!

Congratulations and Best wishes to you and David.

Michael Holden

Chairman of the Institute of Theatre Consultants (UK)

Dear Anne,

I've received 'A Tale of Two Theatres' - what a fascinating read! So many contributions from people whose lives were enriched by connections with the Castle and Redgrave Theatres; you have made certain that Farnham's theatrical

history is kept alive in people's minds. Your brilliant book gives a lively history of the two theatres and shows just how far-reaching are their influences for good. Congratulations to all concerned with its publication.

I love the whole design and lay-out of the book. Those printers in Poland have done a great job and the colourful telegram on the cover is ideal.

Interesting to learn of the NFRC - that hopefully will continue its good work - even more important now that Covid-19 has arrived. I fear that many theatres will have closed for good, but no, one must keep optimistic about all our forms of culture and there is nothing better than live theatre to help understand human nature.

I hadn't realised that the Redgrave had been empty so long just sitting there waiting for a decision by the Council - and all that time you and supporters were doing all you could to make sure Farnham somehow, somewhere, kept a live theatre. Maddening that big business schemes always seem to win, and views of local inhabitants get ignored.

Keep well and best wishes always,

Pauline Jefferson

Cont...

Antony Tuckey
145 Cauldwell Hall Road
IPSWICH
IP4 5DA

01473 714596
07815 619205
dicktuckey@btinternet.com

24.09.20

Dear Anne Cooper

I have just read, with great pleasure your history of the Castle/Redgrave Theatres.
(Yes, there are many voices, but the book essentially is yours!)

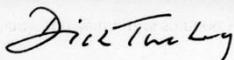
I do not need to tell you that the Farnham we knew was a very different town
(heavens, in 1963, there was still the old Sainsbury's in The Borough, you could buy
2oz's of butter and cheese and watch it being cut!)

May I mention 3 errata? *Not my reason for writing I promise*, that is to say Thank
You for a very pleasant 2 hour read. As an actor my first performance was as Garry
Essendine and I left to become Associate Director of the Bristol Old Vic., an
enormous leap from the smallest Regional Theatre. And I was Director 65/67

And I suppose I would emphasise the extraordinary turnaround Joan Knight achieved,
hers was a make or break appointment....

Thank you again, it is so good you are there to make this history. No reply needed.

Best wishes



Antony Tuckey

Stella Wiseman - published online - Parish Magazine for Badshot Lea and Hale

A Tale of Two Theatres - the story of Farnham's Castle and Redgrave Theatres - has been compiled by Anne Cooper who chairs the Farnham Theatre Association, a group which campaigns for the return of a theatre to Farnham.

Anne has delved deep into the archives of both the Castle Theatre - the cramped, rickety and hugely loved theatre where Zizzi's restaurant now is - and the Redgrave Theatre which replaced it in 1974, but which was closed barely 25 years later.

This book is a joy both to dip into or to read from cover to cover for the story of the development of the theatre and its varied fortunes and personalities is utterly fascinating. Artistic directors came and went, some experimenting and succeeding, others doing less well, but the theatre thrived for many years. Theatre is a tricky business, but it is a vital business, not just in financial terms but in what it brings to its community. The riches which

theatre brought to Farnham and further afield for almost 50 years are apparent in this book which is crammed with anecdotes, memories, pictures of famous actors who trod the boards, and gratitude from people whose lives were enriched by having a theatre in the town.

Sadly, despite thousands of objections, the Redgrave was pulled down and the land it stood on is now part of the Brightwells redevelopment. There is no theatre in this redevelopment.

Quoted in the book are words by Jemma Redgrave, granddaughter of Sir Michael Redgrave after whose family the theatre was named: "Theatre is invaluable to a civilised society, it is inclusive, it asks us to put ourselves into the shoes of another and exercises the organ of empathy. The act of theatre joins us to each other and makes our odd experience of being human a bit more recognisable."

The book ends with a little about the FTA and mentions its need for a home for the theatre archives. I am happy to say that they are now stored at St Mark's.

To purchase the book email sales@farnhamtheatre.co.uk
