

The Farnham Rep marquee has gone but the need for a theatre remains undiminished

It's an irony not lost on the residents of Farnham and the many loyal supporters of Farnham Rep, that the marquee used by the theatre company this season has now gone and only its shadowy footprint remains close to Brightwell House and the Redgrave Theatre. Yes, this building sits there, kept dark by Waverley Council yet with the potential to be brought back for the community.

Farnham Rep produced 3 plays and four Sunday entertainments for their audiences who sometimes braved weather, wind and rain. But variability was only in the weather; performances were consistently excellent. Audiences unanimously agreed they saw exceptional quality theatre – just read what the Farnham Herald and other reviewers said:

**“Spirit of the Redgrave abroad again”
Stella Wiseman; Farnham Herald**

“What a fabulous treat last night was...our first taste of Farnham Rep. What have we been missing! I thought it was brilliant entertainment with superb performances from every actor – absolutely star performances all round. Just superb. **J.M.**”

“I just find it sad that this excellent company, formed in 1998, is forced to stage their productions in venues outside a theatre. This year they are back in a marquee in the gardens behind Farnham's Redgrave Theatre which has been left to moulder like much of the surrounding area. Thought-provoking and entertaining. Don't miss”. **Sue Cansfield; Farnham Herald**



Marquee's shadowy ghost by the Redgrave Theatre

Comments like these demonstrate yet again the undiminished demand for good theatre in Farnham and the need for a permanent home to enable so much more to be brought to the community, not just in summer but throughout the whole year.

Pat Larke - a tribute to an FTA member



Many of you will already know of the passing of Pat Larke. Pat died in early September following a mercifully short illness.

Pat was involved with the Farnham Repertory Company through all its various stages – as a volunteer at the Redgrave Theatre and as one of the founding committee members of the *New Farnham Repertory Company* that Ian Mullins established after the Redgrave's closure.

She was ardent in her work for the campaign to reopen the Redgrave and believed passionately in the importance to a town of theatre. She was deeply involved with a number of groups for which she has been a core and highly active member for decades.

With thanks to Nigel Morley of Farnham Rep

What do people really want?

Mike Simpson, our local Liberal Democrat candidate, at a recent meeting with FTA, passionately confirmed his interest in our aims and campaign to get a theatre reinstated in Farnham.

Mike could see what seems to consistently elude Waverley Borough Council: that live professional theatre invigorates and revitalises a community, that it feeds a natural desire for creative expression, that it draws people from the community to give their support in many ways, that it significantly helps to bind a community together, that it brings real, quantifiable and substantial financial benefits to businesses right across the town.

FTA voiced the idea of an independently managed and assessed survey of what people want to produce hard facts not opinions and Mike Simpson has gallantly offered to distribute such a survey to all households in Farnham together with his own campaign literature. Although very heartening and welcome news, our understandable concern is that FTA and any survey that might be conducted needs to be politically unbiased.



New supporters!

FTA is delighted to announce two new high profile supporters - none other than Geraldine McEwan and Roy Hudd!
Thanks to them both for lending their names and positive affirmations of goodwill to our campaign.



A Community Play for Farnham?

You may have heard of a community play project run by Claque Theatre to be created here in Farnham and to be devised and developed by the community but under the professional guidance of Claque Theatre. It will be a unique event owned by the community. FTA fully supports this inspirational endeavour.

Any interested people can contact Anne Cooper for an invitation to the presentation by Jon Oram, Director of Claque Theatre on 20 October.

Meeting with Jeremy Hunt, MP



At a recent meeting with Jeremy he confirmed his strong support for theatre in Farnham and very much recognised its value to the community across a wide catchment area. To assist him in furthering our case, FTA has compiled new information, from a financial and longer term revenue perspective - one that is often passed over.

FTA believes that Waverley Borough Council see only costs and are understandably concerned that any new theatre – Redgrave or other - might create a draw on taxpayer's funding.

FTA intends to show the significant and powerful arguments which balance this viewpoint that take into account the wider perspective of 'Cultural Capital'. (See article below).

Jeremy Hunt has agreed to help FTA achieve a meeting with Kentaké Chinyelu-Hope, Chair of the Arts Council South East.

We have been in correspondence with her over the summer and she has offered to advise us in our aim to provide Farnham with adequate facilities for theatre.

We will keep you advised of any progress.



CULTURAL CAPITAL - FINANCIAL SENSE ALLIED TO VISION But is Waverley listening?

London mayor Boris Johnson and two-time Oscar winner Kevin Spacey have called for continued investment in cultural attractions during the downturn

Mr Johnson says theatres and museums are not a luxury and contribute greatly to London's economy. Both men gave keynote speeches during an event at the V&A Museum which addressed the issue of funding for the arts in London.



Kevin Spacey and Boris Johnson at the V & A

Tourism is worth £16bn to London's economy, the majority of visitors saying arts and culture are why they visit London. Mr Johnson said: "Arts and culture are not a luxury, they are part of this city's DNA, its unique selling point." It is why people want to live and work here and seven out of 10 tourists say it is a reason for their visit.

"At a time of recession it is more important than ever to invest in the arts." Mr Spacey added: "I genuinely believe that the UK's pre-eminence in arts and culture constitutes one of the nation's most powerful natural resources. "It's time for us all to step up and ensure that our vibrant and diverse cultural life is protected."

This echoes the Government's own findings. In 2005, Michael Holden Associates - who authored the FTA's own report into theatre in Farnham - submitted the case to the Government for 'Cultural Capital' regarding the value of buildings citing the Redgrave, Farnham. Many sections of that detailed submission are quoted in the Government Response to the Culture, Media and Sport Sub Committee Report on Theatres, 2004 -2005.

Farnham, its residents and visitors alike have suffered massively through the loss of the Redgrave. Farnham's cultural life has been drastically impaired with a consequent huge financial loss to the local economy, felt by so many shops, hotels, restaurants and other businesses. It's the loss of Cultural Capital. **Think again, Waverley.**

FTA and Charitable status We are still pursuing the aim of your FTA becoming a recognised charity as there are a number of benefits and have been in discussion with the Charity Commissioners over the most suitable route for us to take. Once we have news we'll keep you advised.

AGM For your Diary

Come to the Association's **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** on the afternoon of Saturday 24th October, 2.45pm at the United Reformed Church Hall in South Street, Farnham (opposite Sainsbury's).

The agenda will include a special musical entertainment – come along and find out what's in store! Make sure you put this date in your diaries now so that you can support our cause and enjoy the entertainment too.

Raffle! Your help please

The AGM isn't complete without a raffle! There will be some great prizes on offer but we'd really appreciate your help so any donated items such as wine, spirits or chocolate are always welcomed.

If you are moved to donate – unwanted gifts or any of the suggestions above - then please contact Celia on 01252 726420 who will be delighted to hear from you.



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