

Claque Theatre's Community play moves ahead

Jon Oram, the Director of Claque Theatre is delighted that so many individuals have given their names to the project to help develop it further.

He also gave an outline timing plan encompassing all the many exciting steps and functions that will need to be covered, culminating in a production date early in 2012.

There are still plenty of opportunities to become involved so to find out more, call Joe Michel on 01252 794223.

Tilford Community Opera auditions

Tilford Bach Society are completing auditions for their Community Opera *Nigel of Tilford*, to be staged on 12 and 13 June with a final date in March. Based on a story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle it's a swashbuckling medieval romance with songs, dances, fights, a royal banquet and a storm at sea.

Are you one of the mighty warriors against whom our hero fights in set-piece battles? There are good parts still to be filled so if you want to be involved in this premiere come along to auditions at Tilford Church on Wednesday 10th March, 7.00 - 9.30pm.

Let them know on 01252 721605 or email: tilfordopera@btinternet.com Auditions will include reading an excerpt, and a check to see where your voice fits; no preparation is needed.



Newsletter

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Working for a regional theatre in Farnham

£2.5 m towards a new theatre – or the Redgrave restored?

MP Jeremy Hunt has advised FTA to apply for £2.5m for 2012, after the Olympics when Lottery money returns to the Arts from Sport.

Our objective will be to achieve a new theatre to meet the expectations of the thousands of objectors to the demolition of the Redgrave. If we can replace the Redgrave, an estimated cost would be some £5m; the remainder to be generated by FTA. At a recent meeting, Rebecca Ball, acting Director for Arts, South East Arts Council England advised FTA on specific points that we should include in an application for lottery funding.

Alternatively, we would apply for a smaller sum for renovation and refurbishment if the Redgrave is available by then through the Government Asset Transfer scheme.



Michael Blower's illustration for a Theatre at Brightwell

Redgrave Reminiscences and Castle Recollections

Another in our series of articles about actors and their memories of working at the Castle or Redgrave Theatres, this is from John Nettleton.



I was in the Castle Theatre Company, but it was only very briefly, in early 1955, when it was a weekly rep. (having worked mainly in Shakespeare at Stratford-upon-Avon and elsewhere since being at RADA in 1950-51).

I found the task of learning a part inside a week to be horrendously difficult and when the plays were actually on, I always had my script in the wings so that I could consult it anxiously between entrances! Times were changing and provincial theatres were gradually changing to fortnightly rep, and my next job was at the Nottingham Playhouse, where having two weeks to rehearse a play seemed a tremendous luxury after Farnham.

Some of my fellow-actors at the Castle Theatre included James Cossins, Derek Smee and Donald Wolfitt's daughter, Harriet. I didn't meet my wife at Farnham - I had met her a year or so earlier and got married a couple of weeks before I went to Farnham.

I had been with the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre Co. at Stratford in 1952 and then toured New Zealand and Australia with them in 1953, when Ian Mullins was also a young actor with the company.

My wife and I were in one or two plays at Basingstoke for Ian, and, after he retired, we saw many productions of his (New Farnham Repertory Company) in the Tent and the Church at Farnham. And now he and I stay in close touch by email.

I do hope that the FTA continues to thrive, and send you all my best wishes. Do please keep me on your mailing-list.

John Nettleton

Thanks very much indeed to you John; we wish you well too!

Arthur Simper

It was sad to hear of the passing away of Arthur Simper. Both he and his partner Joan Anniballi have been staunch and very loyal supporters of the Redgrave Theatre and of the FTA. Our sincere sympathies go to Joan.

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FTA Ltd. achieves charitable status!

Now the FTA is recognised by HMRC as a charity we can benefit in a number of ways including retaining the tax paid on donations under the Gift Aid scheme. We'll let you have more details soon about this including our plans to introduce a membership programme.

Star Billing!

With her letter to the Farnham Herald given Star Billing, in mid February, Anne Cooper, FTA Chairman made a powerful point to Waverley Borough Council. We're delighted to repeat that message here:

Dear Sir,

Waverley Borough Council has approved the plan in principle to transfer the council offices in South Street 'at nil value' to Farnham Town Council (Farnham Herald 12 February). So, if this transfer goes ahead, then Farnham will reclaim what is its own. We should commend the actions of our Town Councillors who have made such excellent progress in pursuing this matter with such determination.

The Council Offices were designed by Harold Falkner and built in 1903 for Farnham Urban District Council (FUDC). The building was transferred 'at nil value' in 1974 to Waverley District Council (later to become Waverley Borough Council) when it took over the assets and responsibilities of the Town Council.

One of the assets also transferred at 'nil value' to the Borough Council at the time was the Redgrave Theatre, which had been created on land at Brightwell House donated to the people of Farnham by FUDC.

The theatre was built largely through public subscription and rightly should belong to the people of Farnham. Based on the retail price index from 1974 to 2009, the sum raised by public subscription is estimated to amount now to just over £2.5m.

If the Crest Nicholson development at East Street should fail for any reason, then the Farnham public should be able to have this property transferred back to them also at 'nil value'.

The Farnham Theatre Association has informed Members of the Waverley Borough Council Executive and other Councillors that this is their view and expressed their hope that they would be able to work closely with the council to achieve such a transfer. A Charitable Trust set up by the Farnham Theatre Association would run the theatre and ensure that no cost would fall on the local tax payer, unlike the acquisition of the Council Offices.

Yours faithfully,

Anne Cooper (FTA Chairman)

TRANSFERRING LOCAL AUTHORITY ASSETS INTO COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

In 2007 the Quirk Review looked at the advantages to communities and local authorities in greater transfer of asset ownership and management from local authorities to community groups.

Since its launch last January, the the national Asset Transfer Unit, working closely with local organisations and almost half of top tier local authorities, believes it realistic to think in terms of 1,000 transfers currently in progress. In present circumstances an increase in transfers is expected over the coming years. One or two of the ATU's published case studies may be of interest regarding the future of the Redgrave Theatre.

Keighley Voluntary Service agreed with Bradford local authority that **Keighley's Central Hall**, unused for a number of years, be transferred to KVS on a 99 year lease for a peppercorn rent to develop a mixed use centre. *A refreshed Central Hall serving all elements of the community was seen as contributing to town centre regeneration plans.*

Other case studies include **Baldock Town Hall**, where the local community approached the council about developing an arts and cultural centre and brought in a theatre designer to draw up plans, **Threadgolds Arts and Heritage Centre** in Portsmouth which is being developed as a multi purpose Arts and Heritage Centre and **Winterbourne Medieval Barn** intended to provide enterprise accommodation, education facilities and space for hosting community events.

The FTA has approached Waverley Borough Council members and officers to inform them of the ATU's "Advancing Assets for Communities" programme and to express its wish to enter into constructive discussion over transfer of The Redgrave Theatre into community ownership and management should the current East Street redevelopment proposals not go ahead in their present form.

For more details see the Asset Transfer website www.atu.org.uk



Keighley Central Hall



Baldock Town Hall



Threadgolds Arts and Heritage Centre



Winterbourne Medieval Barn

East Street - Uncertainty Remains

Crest Nicholson have been promoting themselves as the wise voice of ecological concern. To deal with the huge volume of heavy traffic demanded by the massive development, they would have to remove very many trees by the River Wey at the same time damaging numerous wildlife habitats for a variety of animals.

But the alternative is that ALL the East Street construction traffic would have to plough on through the existing congested roads right in the heart of Farnham causing congestion, noise, air pollution, increased road damage and a disastrous period of 1 - 2 years for trade in the town to suffer.

According to reports, Local Data Company researchers have revealed the number of Camberley's empty shops has very recently doubled, now at 20.4% empty, despite the enormous Crest Nicholson development in its town centre. This development, just like the one proposed for Farnham, is intended to increase trade in the town – not reduce it! Farnham should take heed and not follow Camberley's example.

When will Waverley grasp the bull by the horns and take steps to withdraw from this contract with Crest Nicholson? Surely there must now be undeniable grounds for cancellation through non achievement of viability, time-scale and deadlines?

TWO NEW BIG FUNDRAISING EVENTS THIS YEAR!

BIG BOOK BONANZA Grab a bag and bag a book!

Saturday May 15



For the FTA Big Book Sale put this date in your diaries: **May 15 at the United Reformed Church Hall, South Street, Farnham. Time 2.00 - 4.30pm.**

Here's an ideal opportunity for you to scan your shelves for books you will never read again, anything of any kind or category that you can bear to part with. Ask all your friends, family and neighbours to do the same too. Our collection will gladly include not only books but music and films as well - CDs, LPs, DVDs.

Just collect all your books, CDs and DVDs together then call Celia on 01252 726420 and we will collect.

To ensure the books 'move off the shelves' we'll be selling them by weight to ensure we shift the stock and create good funds. So we won't have to price up individual books, except good hardbacks.

Helpers on the day won't have to haggle over prices with customers. So, if you are able to help us on May 15 by manning a stall or encouraging customers to fill their bags, that would be very much appreciated. Ideally we want helpers there to give us cover between 12.30 and 5.50pm.

If you can help please call Celia on 01252 726420.

It's going to be the Big Book Bonanza!

'A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S FEAST'

Sunday Evening 27 June



The Frensham Pond Hotel

We are planning a wonderful menu of food and entertainment for our midsummer fundraising event.

The venue is perfect; it's the Garden Suite at the Frensham Pond Hotel where we can watch the sun going down over the waters as we feast on a delicious summer supper and enjoy a **Professional Cabaret** and great entertainment with our **Celebrity Auction** of highly desirable theatrical memorabilia and other items. At just £20 a head you won't want to miss out.

It's going to be something for everyone and we want everyone to come, so book the date in your diaries and gather in your friends for a great night out. We'll be sending out booking details in the next few weeks/next newsletter.

We really do promise you 'A Midsummer Night's Feast'.

Donations of items to be auctioned welcomed: please contact Anne on 0844 4125771 or email: anne.cooper@farnhamtheatre.co.uk



Frensham Pond Hotel

FTA joins forces with Tourism South East:

By becoming a member of Tourism South East, FTA will now be able to achieve a more visible public profile, through their website. FTA intends to be the principal contact for theatre information in the area carrying publicity and perhaps ads for local theatre companies theatre such as Farnham Rep, FAOS, Bourne Players and so on, all to give tourists an idea of what is available in our town.

The TSE website address is: www.visitsurrey.com

We'll keep you posted on how this connection is working for FTA..

