



Our Abigail shines in Bath!

Our very own Abigail McKern, Director of FTA, is in a massive hit with 4 and 5 star reviews from The Times, Guardian, Financial Times Daily Mail and all the local papers in Bath. The show is *North by North West*. which she feels means there's a very real chance now of a West End transfer. Abigail says "The audience cheer like mad at every curtain call and some people are saying it's the best show they've ever seen at Bath Theatre Royal so we are feeling very buzzy!"



Abigail McKern

Councillor Kika Mirylees injured in car crash

Fellow actress, friend of FTA and a local councillor, Kika Mirylees is recovering from a very bad car accident in Poland. Saying she is "lucky to be alive", the taxi she was in with her goddaughter and a friend was travelling at 70mph when a learner driver pulled out in front of them. The car ricocheted across the road, spun into a ditch then rolled into a field. The driver helped them escape. Kika and her friends had to spend a few days in hospital before managing to return to England.

We do wish Kika and her friends a complete and swift recovery from this ordeal.



Kika Mirylees

Your Chairman's letter

Readers of this Newsletter may not get or see the Farnham Herald so we make no apology for reprinting extracts from Anne Cooper's letter published by them on 13th July.

In the previous week's paper, Julia Potts, leader of Waverley Borough Council was quoted on the front page as saying that the Brightwells development (that FTA still refers to as East Street!) was imminently to be begun with demolitions. This unwise comment brought many staunch rejoinders in the next week's paper. Anne's was just such a one.

Sir,

The use of the word 'imminent' in the Farnham Herald, July 6 headline about work to start on East Street is more than a little misleading. The impression could be given to new and innocent readers that the Crest Nicholson development is likely to begin in the next few weeks. Reading on we see that Waverley's leader, councillor Julia Potts refers to "the next few months". But even these words put an optimistic gloss on the timetable for actual operations.

It should be pointed out to the Waverley leader that Listed Buildings Consent permission require unusually strong conditions to protect historic buildings. In the case of Brightwell House,



Anne Cooper

the strengthening of walls, support for floors and measures to protect the building against the weather must be in place before any demolition of the Redgrave Theatre can take place. More significantly, none of this can happen until the contract for the development has been awarded to the developer and this in turn depends on all the legal and financial arrangements being settled. There is no way anyone can demolish the Redgrave, leaving Brightwell House open to the elements. Renovation has to be done at the same time and that has to depend on the ability of the developers to adequately fund the scheme.

Only when we have news of more retailers having the confidence to sign up to fill Crest Nicholson's empty shops, will we then be able to believe that the East Street development is truly "imminent".

Anne Cooper, (FTA chairman), Nutshell Lane, Upper Hale



Woodpecker report

My goodness! I have been tapping away here for nearly a year since the alarms went out that the bulldozers were about to rip up Brightwell Gardens. I wonder what on earth happened to all those plans.....?

However, we now hear that the warnings have started up once again, so better keep alert and ready to fly if need be. It really is most unnerving for our friends the bats who have their maternity roosts in the buildings around the site for their broods and do not like to be disturbed. What a war zone it will become when the development really begins!

Can you imagine the site when they lay sewers and dig enormous holes to take the massive drainage tanks, take down those lovely trees along the Bypass and demolish the theatre? I think I'll emigrate.

But, hang on - we've had frights like this before – better to wait until we hear who exactly is going to pay for all this work and that 'those in control' are convinced their investments in this ridiculous scheme won't run off and disappear down the drains like the rainwater !

Tap...tap...tap...

ARCHIVES NEWS To commemorate the 20th year since the Redgrave went dark, FTA intends to publish a small booklet next year, outlining the history of the Castle and Redgrave theatres. We want to highlight the achievements that these two theatres brought, not just to the town but nationally, putting Farnham well and truly 'on the map' in the world of entertainment. Illustrated with pictures, we hope that the booklet will help us raise funds for the long-term maintenance of the archives here in Farnham.

Archives storage needed Can you help us find a new home for the Farnham collections? Costs are rising in local storage and we need to find a permanent space for the archives - a dry spare room or office, ideally to take 3 filing cabinets and a few boxes.

While we have loaned much material to the Surrey History Centre at Woking from our collections, we are keeping back an amount of visual material for display and research which will be easily available for local residents.

Do you know these ladies? Is one of them you?

We continue to receive interesting items to add to the collections and this photo of Sir Michael Redgrave with two fundraisers has recently been uncovered. Does anyone know the names of the young ladies pictured with him?

Please email the Editor, details on page 4.



Norma Dunbar



We are very sad to record the passing away of a wonderful stalwart of the Redgrave and of FTA, Norma Dunbar. She had a great connection to the Players Theatre, the forerunner of the Castle Theatre, and was a dancer, singer and actress. She played a major role in *Fiddler on the Roof*. Having retired to be with her family, she was a regular and staunch supporter at our AGMs. She will be much missed by us all.

Here is a picture of her with other Redgrave supporters taken outside the theatre. Norma is in the front row, far right.

John Noakes

Another sad passing away was that of John Noakes known best for his derring-do when with Blue Peter on the TV and was something of a national 'treasure'. He too had a strong connection to Farnham.

His wife Catherine Fenez ran the shop with her very name in Castle Street right next door to the Castle Theatre. Over the years, John came to Redgrave garden parties and supported the theatre. The photo shows John with his beloved Shep.



TALES FROM THE FILM INDUSTRY

My thanks to you for publishing my memories of *The Third Man* [FTA Newsletters 43, 44 and 45]. I feel I must give you a further insight into this competitive industry of ours. Once in it, you never want to leave.

After *The Third Man* (1949) I went on to make many other films and I am often asked which was my favourite. It was *Saint Joan* (1957) with Sir John Gielgud, Harry Andrews, Richard Todd and Jean Seberg who was given her first big break after Otto Preminger had interviewed many actresses, who went on to become household names. For example, Pat Phoenix, Dorothy Tutin, Barbara Jefford and Vivien Leigh were all turned down by David O. Selznick who held the purse strings.

Had Lord Rank had his way many films like the classic *Genevieve* (1953) would not have been made. 'Who wants a film about old cars?' J. Arthur told me. It just shows how wrong you can be and they did make a few ghastly errors which would have given millions of people pleasure in the cinema if some of those films had been made. But then Lord Rank ruled Pinewood together with his (Rank Hovis) Solent Flour Mills which still stand today in Southampton.

This was followed by the Launder-Gilliat production of *St. Trinians* (1954), those naughty little girls with their hockey sticks and Alastair Sim as the Head Mistress and George Cole as the 'wide boy spiv', all made at Shepperton Studios, which is still going strong and tied up with Pinewood. Many other films followed, for once established you became in demand, but it took time to get into that position, for you were *dealing with the best of artistes, or the worst, as the case may happen to be*.

I went on to make *Privates Progress* (1956) and another war film in 1965, *The Hill* which was a story about an

by JOE MARKS

Army Detention Centre, but no cooperation was given or seal of approval from the then Ministry of Defence or War department. They did not want the Armed Forces to be shown up in an inferior light; it might well have been. It was in this excellent MGM Black and White film that Sir Sean Connery played the part of Sergeant Roberts and Sir Michael Redgrave: the Medical Officer. After that came *Operation Crossbow* (1965) for MGM with Sophia Loren, all about the V1 bombs and the dreaded V2s.

I also had a hand in such films as *Bridge on the River Kwai* which was shot in Ceylon (Sri Lanka). It was a story based on a novel of fiction by Pierre Boulle. David Lean wanted Charles Laughton to play the lead part but Charlie refused to be drawn into the hot, steamy, fly-ridden jungles and preferred a play into which he introduced a young actor named Albert Finney. Sir Alec Guinness got the part instead and Mr. Lean was not a very happy man, especially when his old friend, Alec Guinness arrived.

Next followed a spate of documentaries, including one with HRH Prince Charles on a bridge, looking lost and dependent on his officers for guidance. Finally, several films for the late Michael Winner with many actors, including Mr. O.J. Simpson who felt he should be top of the bill all the time and that no other actors mattered one little bit.

So now my tale comes to an end, my story has been told except that so much has changed as they don't use film any more. I am told it is all Digital and those old pals I once knew have gone into permanent hiding. But, I still have a strong love of the live Theatre, its Actors, its Technicians and those brave people who fill the seats in the stalls, circle or gallery and who keep on coming and never give up.

Joe, thank you so much for your excellent memories of these past times, which show how your love of theatre at the Castle developed into a technical career in world famous cinema.

Membership

Our very great thanks to the many who have responded to our call for renewal of FTA membership and also our very great thanks for the generous donations we have received.

Our regular supporters are staunch and much valued; here are some of the comments we receive when they contact us with their membership payment:

"I have always thought of the shocking waste and cultural vandalism as a result of closing the theatre in the first place. At least two generations of residents having to go without all manner of entertainment in a town the size of Farnham. The Maltings...cannot provide the special sort of intimacy the original building had. A provider of talent locally that could develop nationally" AJ

"I am disgusted with the recent High Court decision on East Street, it is completely wrong. Keep battling on!" JR

Just a reminder that fees became due at the end of March (!) so if you haven't yet responded please do so soon and accept our very grateful thanks in advance.

We rely on your support so please

Become a member of the Farnham Theatre Association.

The more people who become involved, the louder is the message and the more influential we can be. You can easily register online or by sending your details as below together with your membership cheque.

Membership charges are:

Single person £10

Family £20

Group £20

Please send cheques payable to Farnham Theatre Association to: The Treasurer c/o 4 Nutshell Lane, Upper Hale, Farnham, Surrey GU9 0HG

Full Name.....

Address.....

Post Code Telephone.....

Mobile

Email.....

Donation £.....

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARIES!

We have plenty to interest you this year at the **FTA AGM 2017** to be held at the Daniel Hall, Farnham on **SUNDAY 22 OCTOBER at 2.30pm**. Following the formal business our speaker will be **Stephen Spence, Farnham Residents Surrey County Councillor**. As well as duties representing Farnham North residents at County Hall, Stephen also works full time as **Assistant General Secretary of EQUITY** the actors' union.

Put this date in your diaries now and we look forward to seeing you there.

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