

TIME CAPSULE SAGA

In 1972 Sir Michael Redgrave laid a time capsule in the foundations of the Redgrave Theatre.



On 9 September, 1972, Sir Michael Redgrave lays the time capsule in the Redgrave Theatre foundations.

Earlier this year, FTA Director Abigail McKern asked Farnham Town Council for help in rescuing the capsule before demolitions at Brightwells began.

Before long, Waverley Borough Council's new Chief Executive, Tom Horwood offered FTA an invitation to advise where the capsule was buried and asked us how many people we would like to invite for the actual lifting.

We said our theatre consultant, Michael Holden and Chris Baldwin, the 1972

project consultant, would like to come to advise with two or three from FTA, if we could agree a date.

We were surprised to hear soon afterwards that Waverley Leader, Julia Potts and a local builder had lifted the capsule themselves. Ms Potts claimed the publicity in the Farnham Herald with a photo of her holding the capsule. She offered to meet FTA with the Chief Executive, to hand over the capsule for the FTA archives.

We met Ms Potts and Mr Horwood and received the capsule on 4th June. In view of the developers, Crest Nicholson aiming to get on site in July, we thanked her for her swift action in claiming the capsule, saying she must not have trusted Crest Nicholson to do the honours.

The meeting with the new CEO was useful. He agreed that retail experts advise that town centres need more community and cultural facilities to increase the footfall. We said that was why we wanted a theatre. He nodded and he said he understood.

We can only hope that if the 24 shops and 8 new restaurants in the current Brightwells scheme fail to attract occupants, that changes can still be made.

The theatre is still there!

Our Chairman Anne Cooper recently wrote a letter to Alistair Smith, Editor, *The Stage* which was published in the August 9th edition:

Dear Alistair,

A last call for the Redgrave Theatre - its demolition is planned to take place between 10 December and 4 March next year, according to developers.

The contentious and overbearing Brightwells development in Farnham's historic town centre is apparently to go ahead after 15 years of stagnation.

In 2002, Patrick Sandford wrote from the Southampton Nuffield about the Redgrave, "*This is an auditorium as far as I know unique in the country. There is no other theatre with an auditorium of such real intimacy that has such a large stage area. The acoustics of the space are impeccable – there is not a dead spot in the house. The curved shape of the seating arrangement gives a good view from every seat..... the future of live theatre can only live in relatively small buildings where "liveness" is palpable. The Redgrave is such a space par excellence.*

Earlier this year, Malcolm Sinclair, the outgoing President of Equity wrote "*....For an important town like Farnham to leave itself with no purpose built theatre building whatsoever? This seems to be an extraordinary act of self harm.*"

The Farnham Theatre Association (FTA) is producing a booklet with a foreword by Stephen Mangan to commemorate Farnham's two famous theatres, The Redgrave and its predecessor, the tiny Castle Theatre. We welcome recollections from anyone previously involved in those venues to add to those we already have.

We have also issued an open letter inviting new ideas for the Brightwells site, should the present retail scheme be ditched. To benefit future generations of the increasingly heavily populated catchment areas of Surrey and Hampshire, we ask, "Is there anyone out there who could take this treasured small venue out of the hands of the Local Authority and bring it to life once more, before it is too late?"

Anne Cooper (FTA Chairman)

Farnham Flash Festival



Our colleagues in Performers Together ran a very successful second Farnham Flash Festival this year with almost 90 individual events from a diverse range of performers, in a variety of venues and all spread across the 30 days of June. A great achievement! Our congratulations to them.



A new Community Play for Farnham is on the cards!

A few years ago, funding was not available for Farnham's Community Play, but now with Performers Together a Community Play could take place and even become part of next year's festival.

To help generate enthusiasm there is an opportunity to learn more about community plays by signing up for a conference.

Book your tickets NOW for...

The First National Community Theatre Conference & "Different Stages" Social Evening

**Saturday 15th September 2018
The Town Hall, above the Corn Exchange,
Dorchester, DT1 1HF**

Hosted by Dorchester Community Plays Association (DCPA) with Dorchester Arts

Celebrating and challenging the craft and legacy of Ann Jellicoe 1927-2017 and DCPA Honorary Life President

In 1978 Ann Jellicoe founded the Colway Theatre Trust and created the Community Play genre. Over the last forty years thousands of people have experienced the joy and enrichment of participating in community drama. This conference explores that legacy, the current state of community theatre and asks what might lie ahead.

We will welcome David Edgar, one of the UK's leading political playwrights as our opening speaker and Jon Oram, Artistic Director of Claque Theatre as keynote speaker on the work of Ann Jellicoe.

The conference will be led by Stephanie Dale, playwright of *Spinning the Moon* the 7th Dorchester Community Play. It will be an opportunity to hear and meet with theatre practitioners who are seeking to create community work in the current, very difficult funding climate.

£25 – Delegates day and evening (lunch included)
£15 – Students day and evening (limited availability)
£5.00 evening only

To book your place please contact Dorchester Arts on 01305 266926 or Anne Jonathan 01305 269510 email: bannejonathan14@gmail.com

** For full accessibility details, please contact Dorchester Arts' box office 01305 266926

Woodpecker writes....

Farewell, Brightwell Gardens! Farewell lawns, rose beds, shrubbery and trees!

These gardens were once a haven for peace-loving people, birds, bees, butterflies and bats. We, the so-called wildlife, were able to enjoy those gardens around the old house for over two centuries.

As birds, we can clearly see from above what is to come as the fencing is going up and the machinery is moving in. Even the pleasant riverside Borelli walk is being trashed to make way for construction lorries to create a bridge – which in its turn will carry more heavy vehicles over the river between the Farnham Bypass and the Brightwells building site - and, all for what?

We hear there will be enormous buildings with trees planted alongside. But will the trees survive if they are planted - as we have been told - next to massive underground water drainage tanks? No use to us birds at all!



Rumour has it that our friends the bats have lost their maternity roosts completely – it is being put about that they never really existed – well, how did that happen? I do not think we imagined them, because plans were made for a special house to put them in. Now, the poor bats are supposed to roost while the development is being built, perched on top of poles surrounded by the chaos of the construction site for four years. No chance!

At least there is some peace here in the Park, but with more dog walkers expected every day, for how long? Tap, tap, tap

WORK is set to begin on a temporary construction access bridge connecting the Brightwells redevelopment site to the A31 early next month - necessitating a two month lane closure on the Farnham bypass, Crest Nicholson has confirmed.

The bridge will allow for construction traffic to enter the site directly from the A31 throughout the four-year construction phase of Brightwells, thus avoiding the town centre.

It was also confirmed at the briefing that archaeological digs were completed in June ahead of time, with "no items of real historic interest discovered", and hoarding is currently being installed around the development site, replacing the existing Heras fencing.

Brightwells' 30 unit retail centre, incorporating a cinema and restaurants is expected to open in 2021, with the first of the 239 homes being available from December 2020 - 30 per cent of which will be 'affordable', delivered by Crest for Thames Valley Housing Association.

Chris Tinker, chairman of major projects and strategic partnerships at Crest Nicholson, said: "A large part of the work we undertake is in partnership with local councils, supporting the regeneration of towns and cities, and we are looking forward to working closely with Waverley Borough Council, Farnham Town Council and our other local partners to make a real difference to Farnham."

Julia Potts, Waverley leader, added: "I am delighted the scheme has now begun and we can move forward with our plans to transform an underused part of Farnham into a vibrant community space that we can all be proud of."

The latest sad development is the closure of Borelli Walk by the river while this bridge work is undertaken. Another despoiling of Farnham's history and a lost benefit to so many who enjoyed the tranquillity of the river and this delightful walk throughout the seasons. It is intended by the developers to return it to the people but what will it be like then? How much of the access bridge and its foundations will be left in place as an awful memory of what is inflicted on this town by Waverley and Crest Nicholson?

One of FTA's directors, Abigail McKern, recently received this very powerful reaction from the United Kingdom's President of Actor's Equity to the destruction of the Redgrave Theatre.



Abigail McKern



Malcolm Sinclair

"The Profession has been aware for many years of the possible destruction of the Redgrave.

The theatre had a tremendous reputation within the business, named after one of the UK's greatest actors, and had a record of outstanding achievement. Like all institutions it had its up and downs but for an important town like Farnham to leave itself with no purpose built theatre building whatsoever? This seems to me to be an extraordinary act of self harm.

As an actor and President of Equity may I convey my sense of shock on behalf of the UK's theatrical industry and hope and beg this will never come to pass."

**Malcolm Sinclair
President of Equity.**

Abigail comments further:

"At a time when Government thinking is totally FOR encouraging towns to embrace more Arts, Leisure and Entertainment for their growing populations, he sees it as, quote, 'AN ACT OF SELF HARM' by this out of touch administration.

A BADSHOT LEA WOMAN who, as a schoolgirl, was one of the thousands of Farnham residents who 'sponsored a brick' when the Redgrave Theatre was built in the 1970s, has demanded her brick be returned to her when the theatre is demolished.

Christine Goff recently rang Waverley Borough Council to ask what will happen to 'her brick' when the now-derelict theatre is demolished to make way for the Brightwells

scheme, and if Waverley and its development partner Crest Nicholson intend to return the bricks to their rightful owners.

Mrs Goff has personally requested "enough bricks to fix my wall" - but as an alternative has suggested Waverley and Crest make a donation to each of the schools that contributed to the cost of the Redgrave in lieu of their bricks.

A snippet from the Farnham Herald



A history of Farnham's two theatres.

Work continues on the copy for this important booklet about the Castle Theatre from its very earliest days through to the Regrave Theatre, compiling historical detail with relevant anecdotes and observations from the very many who have been involved on and off stage throughout the days.

It's anticipated that publication, in collaboration with Farnham and District Museum Society, will be before Christmas this year and we hope will also be recorded on disc.



Stephen Mangan

We are thrilled that nationally popular actor, Stephen Mangan (*Green Wing*, *Episodes* and *Hang Ups*) has written the foreword for the booklet.

Anyone with memories of acting, directing or designing at either the Castle or Redgrave theatres is warmly invited to send in their recollections and also demonstrate support for our shared cause.

Our booklet will commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Redgrave Theatre and the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Farnham Playhouse, which became The Castle Theatre.

Comments and stories from audiences are also very welcome. Just email the editor, see back page. Even if we cannot include all reminiscences in the booklet, we will welcome them for the archives.



Stephen Spence

AGM

We're delighted to announce that Stephen Spence will assist in Anne chairing the AGM later this year. Those who were present at last year's AGM will remember he came along as a guest speaker and demonstrated his passion, his humour and his eloquence. We're very pleased that Stephen will be with us once again and in the role of Chair. Stephen is a Farnham Residents Councillor, a Surrey County Councillor and the Assistant General Secretary of Equity. A busy man indeed!

Date: **Sunday October 14, from 2.30pm**

Where: **Daniel Hall , Long Garden Walk, Farnham GU9 7HX**

Nearest car park: Waitrose with free Sunday parking.

Please put this date in your diaries now.

We rely on your support so *please* **Become a member of the Farnham Theatre Association.**

The more members we have, the louder is the message and the more influential we can be. Register easily online or by sending your details as below together with your membership cheque. Our financial year begins in April, but if you pay your membership fee after our AGM in October this year and before the end of April next year, it will cover you for the year beginning 1st May 2019.

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 Include your name, address incl postcode, email address (if applicable), phone number plus mobile too (if applicable). We will greatly appreciate any donations you feel able to provide of course as well.



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