

A SORRY TALE or A Seasonal Pantomime



Once upon a time, Wonderland Council, desiring an easy way to create great wealth, hit upon the idea of exploiting for re-development some land and a theatre it owned in a distant corner of its territory in the settlement called Faraway-Town.

The temptation to join with a developer and to share the spoils became overwhelming and soon messengers were sent out to seek tenders for this 'area of opportunity' (as it was then called).

An array of developers came forth with extravagant plans for the people of Faraway-Town to inspect. All the plans were criticised as being too large and unsuitable for the town, but undismayed the Council eagerly grabbed the developer offering the largest reward, even though its plans were far from being the best on display.

Developers, Crunch Niggleson were the lucky winners of this selection and even though their promise of untold numbers of bags of gold has dwindled to zero, Wonderland Council, after nearly 10 years, has been kept under their spell.

A threat of being sued for £millions - should there be even an inkling of disloyalty - has appeared to keep the Council beholden to this developer throughout the passage of time.

Despite the people of Faraway-Town rising up in their thousands several times to object to Crunch Niggleson's plans and their many variations, the unholy alliance between the developer and the landowner Council has continued. Planning rules by the dozen were overridden in the cause of the 'wider public interest' - and the views of the 'silent majority' were used to support the wishes of those with the power.

After 3 years, it was deemed necessary to extend the life of the listed building consent for the demolition of the town's much cherished Theatre. The clock was ticking towards the three year deadline when the consent would expire.

By some mischance, Council workers, carrying out maintenance inside the listed part of the theatre, had discovered ancient cellars beneath the floorboards, thus creating a problem for the Council, who had intended swiftly to dispatch the application with the public barely noticing.

In the event, the application got a great deal of publicity and the objections streamed in. Two MPs wrote in to ask that their constituents' objections should be taken into account, the Borough ward

Councillor and a Town Councillor demanded the application should be heard in committee, but to no avail.

In order to avoid any delay on the application decision, officers took it upon themselves, scurrying to grant permission behind closed doors before the witching hour, lest like Cinderella's golden coach, the whole development plan should be turned into a pumpkin.

The miserable saga goes on to this day. Crunch Niggleson seems to wield the power over this bumbling Council; all the more nowadays as its own viability is in question, with its debts taken on by a distant hedge fund company in foreign lands - where, we understand viability in the financial markets is also less than stable.

The gold believed to reside in this benighted redevelopment scheme may exist only on paper, written in to boost the profile of the developer and to save the reputation of the Council, with the poor town-folk of Faraway-Town looking on in increasing despair, as they foresee the serried ranks of bulldozers advancing upon their beloved town.

Contributed by Grimble



Could there be a fairy tale ending for this sad tale? It may be called Wonderland Council but its efforts so far are sadly disappointing. No rainbow is yet in sight for the unfortunate residents of Faraway-Town. But we live in hope.

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Happy Christmas to all our readers!



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Performance!

Plans develop for a Community Performance Theatre

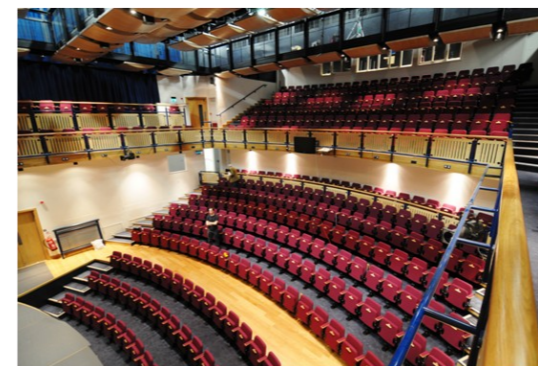
Strong support and encouragement from a wide selection of performing groups and societies has followed FTA's initiative to explore opportunities for a community theatre in the town. Supported by detailed findings from the independent 'Blue Skies' group this new venture is now firmly under way.

At a recent meeting at Farnham Castle, representatives from a number of significant performing groups endorsed the outline plans presented to develop a Community Theatre to meet the needs of the many choirs, bands, opera companies, amateur and professional theatre groups and educational establishments. All have unanimously expressed their strong desire to develop the concept and bring it to fruition for the benefit of the wider community across the broader Farnham area. In fact, the level of demand is from a much wider catchment area than originally envisaged. A Community Interest Company will be set up to work on the project and eventually to run the venue.

New directions

Noted theatre consultant, Michael Holden indicated some building designs that have been used successfully before, based on a shell offering internal flexibility to suit the differing acoustic and performance requirements. These pictures demonstrate the flexibility inherent in these designs.

Hampton School - Performing Arts Centre



The Auditorium



Stage set in Concert Mode

All would like to see a performance space in the town with a lively programme of mixed entertainment: choral concerts, opera, band concerts, seasons of professional plays interspersed with community productions of drama, music and dance with educational projects, business and social events in the mix - something for the whole town.

A new performance venue in Farnham?

The Redgrave Theatre - still under threat of demolition in the contentious East Street plan - may not even be the perfect answer. Although a wonderful drama space with excellent acoustics and sightlines, it lacks the volume for good music performance. Because Waverley Borough Council is wholly resistant to its release, an alternative solution is becoming necessary. A new venue has to be economic to build, suitable for a range of purposes, visually attractive with the qualities to provide a suitable home for public performances including good backstage and front of house facilities. It has to be economic in operation.

Now this campaign is under way, spearheaded by representatives from across the major groups polled in the survey, it amply demonstrates community support for a theatre. Backed by the Theatres Trust, these groups ask the Council to return the Redgrave Theatre building to the people of Farnham who largely paid for its construction or to have it replaced elsewhere in the town.

The business case for a community theatre in the town would be modelled on other successful venues of this kind but be custom-built to suit our local circumstances. The programme would showcase the diverse talents of so many performance groups and form a central and vibrant Community Theatre drawing residents and visitors, young and old alike to the town.

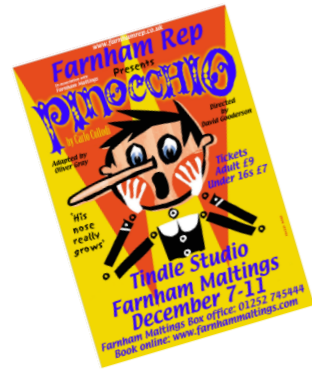
Stage set in Theatre form. Shows the moveable acoustic reflectors and wooden proscenium panels that provide visual and acoustic flexibility.



Interested to find out more?

Don't forget, we will be in the Surrey and Hants office (next to Laura Ashley) in the Lion and Lamb Yard, Farnham every Friday between 10.00am and 3.00pm and we welcome you to call in and discuss a community theatre with us.

Here are details of upcoming productions from some of our Community Theatre supporters



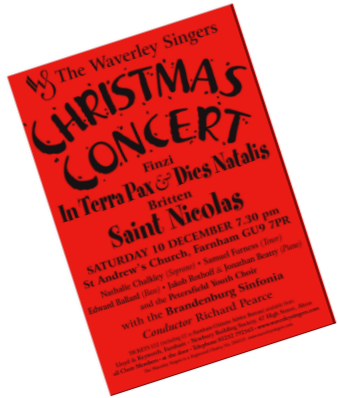
Farnham Rep - Pinocchio Wed. 7 - Mon. 12 December
 Wed Dec 7: 10.30am, 2.00pm; Thur Dec 8: 12.30am, 2.00pm
 Fri Dec 9: 10.30am, 2.00pm, 7.00pm; Sat Dec 10: 11am, 2.00pm, 5.00pm
 Sun Dec 11: 4.00pm, 6.00pm
 Tindle Studio, Box Office Farnham Maltings www.farnhammaltings.com

For more details see www.farnhamrep.co.uk

Farnham Youth Choirs

Christmas Words and Music
 Saturday 10 December 5.00pm

Music, poetry and prose by candlelight + mulled wine, mince pies.
 Tickets £9 at door, St Thomas-on-the-Bourne Church, Farnham
<http://www.fyc.org.uk>



The Waverley Singers

Christmas Concert
 St. Nicolas
 Saturday 10 December
 7.30pm St. Andrew's Parish Church.
 Tickets - Lloyd and Keyworth, Downing St., Farnham
www.waverleysingers.co.uk

Alder Valley Brass
Christmas Concert

Sunday 11 December 2.30pm
 St. George's Church, Badshot Lea
www.aldervalleybrass.org.uk



Hart Male Voice Choir

Christmas Concert
Wednesday 14th December 7.30pm

With Special Guests: **The Farnborough Concert Band of the Royal British Legion**

The Maltings, Farnham



Our own Abigail McKern at the **National Theatre**
 in **Travelling Light**
 starring Antony Sher and directed by Nicolas Hytner
 at the Lyttleton Jan - June 2012

www.nationaltheatre.org.uk



Opera South
Merrie England

in February 2012
www.operasouth.co.uk



Abigail McKern - just back from **Birmingham Rep** Theatre - sends this poem, written by the first YOUNG POET LAUREATE, Helen Monks

Helen Monks, Young Poet Laureate.

Helen wrote it to celebrate the amalgamation of the Birmingham Rep with the huge new public Library building.

Abigail says, "We did a Topping Out celebration a few weeks ago reading poetry and Shakespeare on the

building site in front of the Press and dignitaries. I think it is very inspiring that a young person feels so strongly about literature and the Arts."

We're delighted to reproduce it here.

WRITTEN AND READ

It's the written with the read,
 The thought with the said,
 It's the solo with the crowd,
 The quiet with the loud.

The Theatre's food for the spirit,
 The Library's food for the soul,
 We join them together,
 To create a whole.

Where the theatre feeds the heart,
 The Library feeds the mind,
 We join them together,
 To feed Mankind.

It's the written with the read,
 The thought with the said,
 It's the solo with the crowd,
 The quiet with the loud.

The theatre's a place of company,
 Where the Library's a private place,
 We join the two together,
 To create a shared space.

The Library's a place of thought,
 The theatre's where you act,
 We join them together,
 The fiction and the fact.

So although they may seem different,
 These two both entwine;
 For it has to be written to be read
 And it has to be thought to be said.

Helen Monks

AGM

On 15th October FTA held its AGM at St Joan's Centre, Farnham.

Long-standing Director, Marie King-Hele retired at this AGM and was thanked for her outstanding contribution over many years, in particular for her knowledge of the ways of Councils.



Marie King-Hele

She says, "I remain a firm supporter and ready to help where I can in the future. A Community Theatre in Farnham would be of immense value to the cultural life of the whole area and there is a strong foundation for it."

Directors, Anne Cooper and John Price stood down this year by rotation, and were subsequently re-elected.

Chairman, Anne Cooper reviewed the key events of this past year including the visit from Chris Jaeger of the Swan Theatre, Worcester who inspired us to plan more broadly to engage the wider community in our thinking.

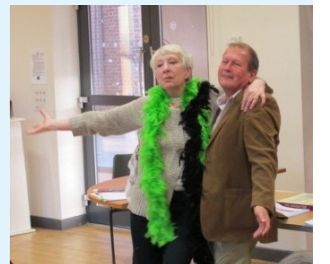
This work coincided with that of the Blue Skies group (details of which have already been covered in this and previous newsletters).

Anne paid tribute to those who continued to object to the demolition of the Redgrave Theatre and for their perseverance in the face of Waverly's seeming obduracy.

She thanked again the former Farnham Theatres' Archive Association, which had decided to wind up their association and to pass the archive material and the residue of their bank account over to the FTA. This was unexpected and very much appreciated. The archive material is considerable, is safely stored and in good condition. FTA's plan is for this material to be properly catalogued and recorded.

After delicious refreshments, entertainment with audience participation was provided by Kay Williams who played the keyboard and sang songs that many remembered with affection.

Celia Sandars and Chris Reeks - the spirit of audience participation



Community Play to unite the town



Janet Martin, chairman of the Community Play project welcomed the mayor of Farnham and representatives from a number of leading local organisations and companies to a lunch at The Old Court House, kindly given by Sir Ray Tindle.

This marked the launch of the town's Community Play.

Jeremy Hunt MP is the patron; Farnham Town Council is already supporting the project.

Amongst others at the lunch were Stephanie Dale, the writer and Jon Oram, the founder of Clague Theatre, whose company has been putting on community plays for over 30 years in this country and abroad.

"This promises to be an exciting and unique project that will build bridges across the community drawing young and old together, involving people from outlying villages and uniting all in a common cause" The project is open to all, "No-one will be turned away", said Janet.

Anyone wanting more details can drop into the Lion and Lamb Yard shop which is open every Friday from 10am to 3pm.