

FOBS

As this Newsletter is coming to you at the very beginning of February, perhaps it is not too late to wish everyone a very happy New Year. Your committee members were all delighted to see so many FOBs at the 'Christmas Drinks' Sunday in December. It really does make such a pleasant start to the festivities with the Theatre looking at its loveliest.

2008 finished in fine form with performances by several local dance schools. It was good to have Christie Francis back with her Difford School of Dance and to welcome two new groups – Jackie Driscoll with her Glow Theatre group and Jay Aston with her School of Theatre Arts. Jackie plans to become a 'regular' having booked several slots for 2009 including a youth entry for the Southern Counties Drama Festival. We hope that Jay felt sufficiently happy at our Theatre to consider coming again too. Many favourable comments were made by first time visitors and it really helps the Theatre to attract new audience members.

The Barn Directors organised two contrasting offerings, with Led Zeppelin raising the roof one Saturday, followed the next weekend by a more mellow, seasonal "Christmas Cracker" to close the year.

At the time of writing we have still to enjoy the pantomime - sweet and bar stocks are high in anticipation! Pippa is taking a short 'breather' after her efforts to fill all those Front of House slots before completing the task again for the Southern Counties Drama Festival. This promises to be another busy week for all of us with a Saturday matinee looking likely, so please do your best to support the Festival.

The Operatic Society has kindly agreed to let us use the Theatre on Monday 30th March for our AGM. The AGM notice and papers will be coming to you soon but do get the date into your diaries right now as we appreciate the encouragement of a really good turnout.

My Darling Clemmie

By Hugh Whitmore, Performed by Rohan McCullough

At the Barn Theatre, Oxted at 7.45 on Thursday 26 March 2009 in aid of the RNLI Tickets £12.00 – 01883 715186

Clementine Hozier was just 19 years old when she was first introduced to Winston Churchill at a dance in 1904. Churchill just stared at her and did not even ask her to dance. Clementine's parents had become estranged and her mother, Lady Blanche Hozier, was compelled to bring up her children in somewhat reduced circumstances. Clementine had been to school at Berkhamstead where she had been head girl. She was a striking beauty with lots of admirers. She did not meet Winston again for another 4 years.....

"My Darling Clemmie" portrays the story of Clementine's life. Hugh Whitmore, the well known playwright, has written many plays including "The Gathering Storm" about Winston Churchill for television in 2002 for which he won an Emmy, the Writers' Guild of America Award, and the Broadcasting Press Guild Award for the best television drama of 2002.

Rohan McCullough has performed in theatres throughout the country including the Brighton and Edinburgh Festivals and has won many awards. She gives a compelling, engaging and moving performance.



Beer but no Coffee!

There I was, Duty Director, propping up the bar deep into the second half of 'Funny Thing'. A conversation was going on on the other side between the coffee lady, (who alas had dispensed with the last drop of coffee) and the barmaid. They were discussing the fate of John Sargent and the manner of his exit from Strictly Come Dancing. "If only he had tried to get his hands to be a bit more like a dancer" said the coffee lady, holding aloft the crystal clean coffee jug in a most artistic way.

What a wonderful pose she held. Surely she had some dance training? A most fascinating conversation then ensued. It turned out that the coffee lady had been a student at the Royal Ballet School back in the early 50's. She said that students were often called upon to bolster the chorus and as a result had danced at Covent Garden and Sadlers Wells in ballets and operas, with such stars as Margot Fonteyn, Moira Shearer, Robert Helpmann and others from 1952 to 1953.

"What was dear Margot like?" I asked.

"Miss Fonteyn was a lovely lady; unfortunately she contracted diphtheria while I was at the Royal Ballet School and often came to our classes to build up her strength. She would slip in unannounced and take a place at the back of the class; I remember she was always in pale pink practice clothes and by the end of the class tears of exhaustion would be streaming down her cheeks. She was back on top form within six weeks".

"Fascinating." I said. "Is there any chance of a coffee?" (I felt I had strayed into the tea room in Brief Encounter!)

"Sorry coffee's off now."

"Ok, so what else did you do?"

"Well from 1953 to 1954 I was in variety shows at the London Palladium, with Terry Thomas, George Formby, and Billy Cotton's Band plus three months of Pantomime with Julie Andrews as Cinderella, Max Bygraves as Buttons and Jon Pertwee as an Ugly Sister."

"Ah Pantomime, now I could tell you a thing or two about Panto!"

"Oh, no you couldn't!"

"I'm not going there, move on!"

"I auditioned for *The King and I* at Drury Lane and from 200 dancers I got down to the last 20 but missed out because my eyes were too round. For the next three years I had a wonderful time as a dancer mostly travelling in Europe and the Middle East. I also did lots of TV work including the first night of ITV. I then returned to doing Pantomime, appearing as Columbine in a Victorian Harlequinade with Hatty Jacques as the Fairy, another long run. Shortly after this I married and moved to West Africa with my husband; together we have had the longest run of all."

And right on cue, on the very mention of "long run", the auditorium doors burst open and another happy and satisfied audience streamed out and left the theatre to brave the evening chill, no doubt scurrying home to a nice hot cup of coffee!

Instant Sunshine

The Friends of Oxted Health Centre and Community Organisation raise funds to provide extra pieces of equipment which the NHS cannot for the benefit of everyone in the community. Thanks to the generosity of local people we have air conditioning in the Health Centre and our own ultrasound service. To enable us to continue our work we need constantly to raise funds. To this end, on Saturday 20 June, thanks to the generosity of the Barn Directors in offering us the use of the Theatre free of charge, we are planning a major fund raising event. Dr. Myers, our Chairman, has secured the services of a group known as "Instant Sunshine" to provide us with a unique evening of original songs. Tandridge District Council has agreed to make a grant to cover the costs of the production so that all the proceeds will be used for the further benefit of all who use the Health Centre. Please do buy tickets and encourage others to do so as this is a wonderful opportunity to raise a considerable sum on just one enjoyable evening.

Sheila Bennett