



Barn Theatre

Royal Souvenir Edition



News

Volume 9 Issue 2 May 2005

A ROYAL FANFARE WELCOMES THE DUKE

Whilst sitting by a swimming pool in the Philippines, sipping an early evening cocktail, the last telephone call I expected from the office in Westerham was one to say that the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Surrey wished to talk to me confidentially and urgently. Was I to be summoned back to the UK and locked in the Tower or just summarily executed upon my return?



WAITING IN THE COLD, THE DUKE ARRIVES

The time differences and imperfect mobile telephony meant it was at least two days before we finally spoke and I was asked if we could prepare the Barn for a Royal Visit by HRH The Duke of Kent for the opening of Barn 2000. The visit was to be on Thursday 24th February, 3 weeks hence and 2 weeks after my return to the UK – quite a challenge I thought but I wasn't going to refuse as I had waited 18 months for this call.



SHOWING HRH THE BAR AND MURAL

For me to try and liaise successfully from 8000 miles away was foolish but the visit was to be strictly confidential and I was not to tell my fellow trustees until it was confirmed by the Palace. Mrs Sarah Goad the Deputy Lord Lieutenant understood the predicament and agreed that until my return she would talk to my nominee, Martin Patrick. By the time I returned Martin had arranged the appropriate meeting at the theatre with the Palace

and security officials and the visit was soon confirmed – we were on the road to another spectacular event at the Barn.

A hurried meeting of the Trustees, FOBs and main user groups was called and a plan of action began to evolve with everyone playing their part in the arrangements for the day. Fortunately our experience of working to deadlines for shows stood us in good stead and the wheels moved forward very smoothly as the time for the visit approached. Planned future maintenance work in some areas, was brought forward to ensure our pride and joy looked at its best for the day. Guest lists were prepared, invitations printed and posted. Refreshments, entertainment, photos, flowers, a visitors book, a carved solid oak plaque; all of these and many more little things had to be arranged at short notice – there could be no delays or let downs.

The weather forecast for the week and the day in particular were dire, so extra supplies of sand and salt were stored in the studio just in case and TDC were asked if their gritters could possibly help in the event of snow on the day.

The 24th arrived, a cold wet and snowy day and the Trustees came early in wellies and best suits to keep the car park clear but soon the Barn was full of cheer and sunshine as guests arrived to join us for this momentous occasion. Even TDC arrived with the gritting machine but sadly it ran out of grit 20 feet up the drive!

For security reasons guests were required to be in place for at least one hour prior to the arrival of HRH and certainly the auditorium, packed to capacity looked like a "Who's Who of the Barn", past and present. Martin Patrick had assembled a cast of thousands to entertain before and during the Visit, not easy at such short notice. Apart from Barn regulars we were joined by the children from St Mary's School, Caterham Preparatory School The Maureen Brown School of Dance and Daphne Fairbrass. Peter Ramage continued throughout the morning bringing to life the incredible backcloth for Pirates of Penzance, a scene off the coast of Cornwall looking toward St Michaels Mount.



PETER RAMAGE AT WORK