

## A new theatre for Farnham?

### What did lockdowns do for FTA and its quest for a new theatre?

Apart from Anne Cooper using the time to compile ***A Tale of Two Theatres*** in 2020 and ***Theatre in Farnham between the Wars*** in 2021, FTA's theatre consultant, Michael Holden was once again hard at work on our behalf.

***Farnham Theatre – a Review of the Past and the Future*** by Michael Holden is a substantial and detailed document which lays out the case for a new theatre in the town. This was presented to Farnham Town Council and Waverley Borough Council earlier in the year, and there have been encouraging signs of interest.



FTA is proud to have the highly valued, long standing support of a theatre consultant who chairs the international Institute of Theatre Consultants:

Michael D. Holden PHd, MA, MioTC, FRSA.

His experience and expertise adds immeasurably to the weight of his detailed analysis and conclusions.

Michael has a long experience in the creation of theatres and arts facilities. He was management consultant to the Barbican Arts Centre in London, and the Lyric theatre in Hammersmith where he was also the founding chairman of the operating trust.

He was chief executive of the Globe Theatre during its business plan formation and the construction of the Globe, steering the theatre through its opening seasons. He has been a UNESCO Cultural Consultant with several missions completed in Africa and Asia. In a long career he has worked in stage management, theatre production, town planning and property development as well as designing the business plans and/or buildings of more than one hundred theatre auditoria.



Dr. Michael Holden, Jeremy Hunt MP and Anne Cooper in 2006



### Town Centre Regeneration

Positive discussions have taken place with Waverley Borough Council and Farnham Town Council.

Now the Arts Council's latest report contributes further. ***A High Street Renaissance*** underlines the importance of reviving town centres with cultural attractions, post pandemic.

This publication, *A High Street Renaissance* has been generated by BOP Consulting and outlines the issues and opportunities across the country to regenerate high-streets. We are sharing this with key FTC councillors. The impressive report follows the review of the High Streets Task Force.

We are still a long way from being able to say that a theatre is on the way, but there has never been a more favourable time to present the case to the councils who are, at last, listening! This is undeniably a long-term goal but one that is certainly worth pursuing.

The Stage magazine draws on this report and states under its bold headline:

### Two thirds of people believe that culture improves their area, survey claims

The article continues: '69% of the 3,838 people surveyed, "think having museums, libraries and music venues on their high streets makes their town or city a more desirable location to live."

When asked what they would like to see more of on their high streets, respondents chose culture as the joint top answer alongside shops and ahead of pubs, bars and restaurants. More than 20% of respondents said a theatre would make them more likely to want to visit their local high street. And 6 in 10 said that culture makes them proud of where they live.

These are indeed, powerful and compelling answers and exemplify what FTA and others have been saying for many years.

The report includes examples of how cultural venues can help bring visitors back to town and city centres. One example was the redevelopment of the Storyhouse theatre, cinema and library in Chester which led to a 15% increase in footfall to its city-centre location.

Another example is Stockton-on-Tees. A Guardian article (21 August) describes how the town 'ripped up the rule book to revive its High Street' with a restored theatre.

While opportunities for a theatre in and around East Street continue to look remote, FTA is investigating whether a theatre could be sited to help revive West Street, making that truly the cultural side of the town.

## Service To Farnham Awards 2021

Ten outstanding servants of the community were rewarded with Services to Farnham awards at the Farnham Town Council chamber on Monday 17 May. One of the ten was our good friend, David Wylde who was described as a passionate champion for Farnham over many years supporting the arts, culture and built environment.



The Farnham Herald said, 'Having run the speaking course at U3A Farnham and been the assistant director at The Castle Theatre, he has been active in many walks of Farnham life. Articulate and committed, David had never shied from challenging institutions and public bodies whose approach did not seem to be serving Farnham well or where there was room for improvement. He has demonstrated his strong commitment to achieving a positive future for Farnham and has been an active supporter of the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan.'

David is recognised as being a true citizen of Farnham who invests time and effort into ensuring the town remains vibrant and retains its attractive characteristics'



David Wylde in serious mood receiving his Services to Farnham Award

## MEMOIRS OF A COVID MOUSETRAPPER

From Brenda Longman

*(This is the first instalment of a piece from Brenda about her role in The Mousetrap. More in the next issue!)*

Wednesday August 18th



Today I received my first Mrs Boyle fan letter from a young man who had chosen to visit on his 21st Birthday.

It was so full of praise for my performance that I am far too modest to mention it here but I am thrilled he had such a wonderful Birthday in which I played a small part.

When I auditioned for this play I was asked if I'd ever seen it. "No!" I replied.

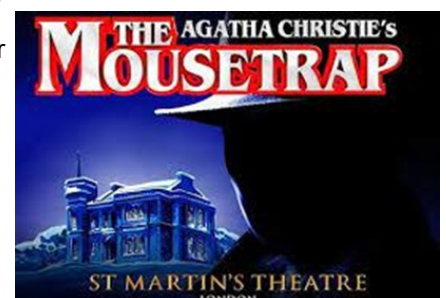
"Good" said Mr Talbot (Ian Talbot OBE) "Then you won't be influenced by anyone or anything that has gone before" "Shall I watch it one evening during rehearsals, Ian?" "No..... I'd rather you didn't!"

When I finish this run at the end of November I STILL won't have seen it as I meet my demise at end of the first act. BUT.....WHODUNNIT??????

Why not come and find out?

Some of the 400 plus Mousetrappers who have also played The Castle or Redgrave Theatres and in no particular order:

Doreen Andrew, George Pensotti, Nicholas Courtney, Christopher Bramwell, Jonathan Drysdale, Tony Boncza, Maev Alexander, Karl Moffatt, Judy Hopton, David Monico, Venetia Barrett, Susan Bovell, Jan Waters, Jennifer Wilson, Ian Cullen, Philip Lowrie, Elizabeth Power, John D Collins, Annette Kerr, Patricia Samuels, Michael Burrell, Peter Byrne, Nicola Hamilton, Sebastian Abineri, David McAlister, Dennis Chinnery and now, Brenda Longman







*The Mousetrap*—Current crowd but with Alexander Wolfe missing as Christopher Wren

## DAVID MONICO 1938 – 2021

Our thanks to Chris Reeks for contributing this obituary.

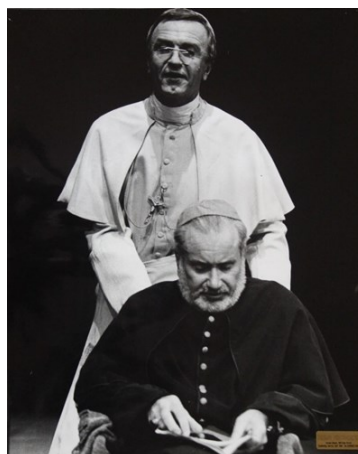
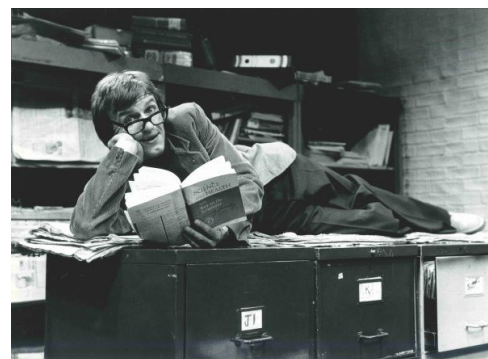
We are sad to report the passing of David Monico who was a firm favourite with Farnham audiences at both the Castle and Redgrave theatres.

After three years at Cambridge where he was a member of the famous Footlights along with the likes of Peter Cook and Eleanor Bron, David began his career at Salisbury Playhouse in 1960. He made his Farnham debut in the autumn of 1970 as Mr. Puff in Sheridan's *The Critic*, and soon became much appreciated by Farnham audiences in many diverse roles including Sir Hector Benbow in *Thark*, Harold in *Boys in the Band*, Hadrian VIII (a role he reprised at the Redgrave in 1983), Mr Potter in *Free as Air* and the evil Herman Von Liversausage in *The Amazing Adventures of Wizard Sid*.

David played Montague in the Redgrave's opening production of *Romeo and Juliet*, followed later by *Royal Hunt of the Sun*, *A Man for all Seasons*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Alphabetical Order*. After a gap of eight years, he returned to the Redgrave in 1983 for several plays including *Under Milk wood*, *Dirty Linen*, *Charley's Aunt* and as a wonderful Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*. Over the Christmas of '84/'85 he played Daddy Warbucks in Stephen Barry's production of *Annie*. David appeared in over 30 plays in Farnham, his last performance being as Hercule Poirot in *Peril at End House* in 1986.

David's career took him to theatres all over the country and the West End where his appearances included Mr. Paravicini in *The Mousetrap* and Mr. Sowerberry in *Oliver*. As well as being an actor, David was also a distinguished director and writer, his play *Of Cabbages and Kings* had several productions and was performed in repertoire with *Henry V* at the Castle Theatre in 1973.

In 2004 David returned to Umbria in Italy where he welcomed his many friends.



(top) David Monico as John in *Alphabetical Order*, 1976  
Photo by Michael Sargent Studios.

(above left) As William Rolfe in *Hadrian VII* 1983, with Alan Hay at front

(above right) David Monico as Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* 1984

Both immediately above photos taken by Tony Grant.

With our thanks to Peter Hunter and Chris Reeks for selecting these photos from the archives.

# AGM

We are delighted to say that our AGM this year will now be a physical one and need not be via Zoom!

Please note this date in your diaries: Sunday 24 October, 2.30pm at the Daniel Hall, Farnham. Remember that parking is free on Sundays in the Waitrose car park.

We're delighted that Dr. Michael Holden will be attending to talk of the possibilities for a theatre for Farnham and we hope to see Stephen Spence to say goodbye to him before he goes to Australia and to thank him for all he

has done for FTA and for Farnham. As many of you will know, both are really interesting people with a great deal to impart to us so this AGM will be a significant time for us all to get together and share the latest information and perspectives on the future for Farnham and our wish that culture plays its important part in establishing a vibrant future for the town and all its residents.

We look forward to meeting you all once again in person on **Sunday 28th October, 2.30pm at the Daniel Hall.**



## Performers Sadly Not Able to be Together

For obvious reasons, our friends in Performers Together cic were not able to run their usual month-long season of activities in June – the Farnham Fringe Festival - much the same as last year. So sad. This year, the only element that took place was the short story competition which achieved many entries and was masterminded by Cllr. Sally Dickson.

Catherine Powell, who is Surrey County Councillor for North Farnham, would like to see venues in Upper Hale/Hale used for the arts and performance. She also mentions Hale School with its large Hall and plenty of parking, but is only available of course, in School Holidays. There is also a good space at St Marks, Upper Hale with its restored Arts and Crafts murals, see below.

## FTA THEATRES ARCHIVES

Good news – at last our archivists, Peter Hunter and Chris Reeks have been able to start work on the archives in the basement of St Mark's Church now that Covid19 restrictions are lifted. FTA took the opportunity to book a small table at the Art and Crafts Fair on 17 July at the Church, which is celebrating the restoration of its attractive murals, created by artist, Kitty Milroy over a hundred years ago.

This Church provides a very attractive space for events and performance and has previously hosted events for Performers



Together. We were delighted to be able to sell a very good number of our books, *A Tale of two Theatres* and *Theatre in Farnham between the Wars* in aid of our archives project. We will be returning with a larger display during the Heritage Open Days week for another Art and Crafts Fair at the Church on Saturday 18 September (10.00am-2.00pm),

We would like to encourage readers to come long and support us and to see the murals.

Two of the Kitty Millroy Arts and Crafts murals on display in St Mark's Church, Upper Hale, Farnham. (top) Shower, Sun, Moon and Cloud, (bottom) Water, Summer, Winter and Wind.



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