

SPRING 2003 - 2023 HOW THINGS HAVE CHANGED!

On 22nd April 2003 Crest Nicholson Sainsbury signed the original Development Agreement with Waverley Borough Council for the regeneration development at East Street, Farnham. Twenty years later, these parties have managed to create the half-finished site called Brightwells Yard. The finishing date moves ever forward as yet another problem emerges with this poorly thought-through development. The latest disaster is the unforgivable trashing of the historic architectural features of Grade II listed Brightwell House - and this miserable situation was achieved at the expense of losing the Redgrave Theatre.



This was Brightwells as it was - in its much admired location.



Brightwells as it was — with the delightful Bowling Green



Brightwells as it is now — the desecrated exterior and surroundings



Brightwells now — the desecrated interior with views

STOP PRESS *“Call to fine Crest for Brightwell House breach”* (F. Herald 16.03.23). Crest agrees to remedy the western bay roof, but FTA supports Mark Westcott’s demand that Waverley should insist that all the planning discrepancies must be put right.

Waverley - Dereliction of duty and desecration of Brightwell House

We were pleased to see that in the Farnham Herald 9th February there were a number of pieces about Brightwells, looking at the house in its heyday illustrated with many good photos. This compared so vividly to the photos above showing the desecration inflicted upon this Grade II house by Crest Nicholson and how poorly it looks against its overbearingly high and close neighbours. Local architect Mark Westcott has also detailed the damages to much of its structure – the loss of certain doors and windows, the out of scale roofscape and more. It is shocking that Waverley's own conservation and building quality control people have not already come down hard on Crest Nicholson.

FTA has been able to assist Mark in compiling a record of events surrounding the fate of Brightwell House leading up to the present fiasco. Also our

archivists, Peter Hunter and Chris Reeks while visiting the Surrey History Centre have collected early photographic images for Mark of the architectural features of Brightwell House.

Anne Cooper's letter in that issue highlighted the history and here it is in full in case you missed it. Our good colleague David Wylde wrote a further letter urging Waverley to use its statutory powers to insist the restoration is in line with the regulations connected to listed building status. Crest Nicholson's permission to demolish our valuable theatre was given solely on grounds that Brightwell House was to be restored to its 'former glory.' Will commercial pressures now result in not only the theatre gone, but the historic architecture of the house trashed?

Here is Anne's letter:

It is not only Brightwell House that needs restoring, but is also the collective reputations of Crest Nicholson, Waverley Borough and Surrey County Councils! The present fiasco over the ripping out of parts of the historic fabric of the Grade II house is the latest instalment in the long saga of cultural vandalism inflicted on this treasured part of Farnham, and it is time to bring it to a halt.

For those who do not know the history of Waverley's long desire to get rid of the theatre, the situation may need explanation. The Local Authority had once made decisions over the Redgrave Theatre which resulted in financial loss and so decided to close the theatre. As it was such an embarrassment, the solution appeared to be resolved by sweeping the theatre entirely away in a grand regeneration plan. Brightwell House would have to go as well, to offer an 'unencumbered site' to developers. However, further embarrassment awaited Waverley, as English Heritage (EH) thwarted the council's attempt to have the house de-listed and EH actually strengthened the listing.

Forced to re-instate the late Eighteenth Century Grade II listed house into the regeneration plan, Waverley needed to justify the demolition of the Redgrave Theatre, under planning regulations for listed buildings. As the Redgrave Theatre was attached to Brightwell House, it formed part of the theatre, housing a restaurant, bar and other facilities. The theatre was covered by the Grade II listing status and strict planning rules applied to any plans to interfere with it. The Redgrave could only be demolished provided certain planning conditions were met and it appears now that many of these may have been flouted by Crest Nicholson.

The expectations were that Brightwell House would be restored expertly to its 'former glory' as a late 18th century villa with nationally important historic connections. Without the Redgrave Theatre, the house would retain something of its former dignity. The demolition went ahead in 2019 but at a time when theatres were recognised as a worthy means of getting people into struggling town centres. In Farnham's case, the theatre would have

helped attract visitors and residents into Brightwells Yard, bringing trade to all those difficult-to-let retail units. It has dawned on our councils too late that the theatre could have been a boon, rather than an encumbrance and now we have Brightwell House looking a mess, with parts of its historic fabric mutilated. Another embarrassment!

Surrey County Council has taken on responsibility for the retail side of operations at Brightwells Yard. Will it step in and insist that Waverley's Planning Enforcement team has the courage to stand up for its reputation of being 'tough' on those who flout its planning rules? Are the two Councils strong enough together to stand up to Crest Nicholson and demand that the developer restores Brightwell House according to its official accreditation? If not, the proverbial egg will be liberally spread over all three!

Yours faithfully,

Anne Cooper
(FTA Chairman)

Our Theatre Archives — can you help?

We are always looking for photographs to fill in gaps in the theatre archive collection. We are particularly lacking in photographs showing either the Castle or Redgrave Theatre buildings (interior or exterior), and photographs of productions prior to 1970. If you are able to scan them and send them to us by e-mail or a link to let us download them, we would be very grateful. We are also very happy if you send them to us, so that we can scan them and return them to you. Any loans or donations will be suitably credited in the records of the Association.

For a contact email Anne is happy for you to use anne.cooper@farnhamtheatre.com if you wish.

New Director at Farnham Maltings

FTA warmly welcomes Peter Glanville's appointment at the Maltings. Farnham is extremely lucky to have this man of theatre leading the town's cultural offer.

It was a great pleasure for Anne Cooper, Abigail McKern and Chris Reeks to meet Peter at the Maltings in February and to witness his great enthusiasm for theatre in many of its forms. We learnt that Farnham was Peter's prime chosen place to live with his young family. He was then surprised to find the position of Director vacant at the Maltings and was delighted to take up the appointment.

Before his arrival in Farnham, Peter had already developed an impressive reputation for children's theatre as Artistic Director of [Polka Theatre](#) in Wimbledon. This success followed years as Artistic Director and CEO of the puppet theatre, [Little Angel Theatre](#). He had directed several acclaimed productions for Polka, including one with the Royal Opera House, two of Julia Donaldson's stories and had won an OFFIE award for his adaptation of Peter Pan.

Apart from establishing the biennial London Puppetry Festival for adults, Peter has also created further innovative festivals, exploring how technology and neuroscience shape theatre and our minds.

Among Peter's other accomplishments, he also had directed an acclaimed production of *Macbeth* with Helen McCrory, *The Tempest* (RSC Co-Production) for The Swan Theatre and Carol Ann Duffy's *The Tear Thief*, narrated by Juliet Stevenson.

We look forward with great expectations, to what this talented man can bring to Farnham.



Peter Glanville, now at the Maltings.

A MEMORIAL REMINDER

**BRIGHTWELL HOUSE
BECAME PART OF
THE REDGRAVE THEATRE**

1974 - 1998

**ROYAL VISITS FROM
PRINCESS MARGARET AND
PRINCESS ALEXANDRA**

As you may recall, to complete the history of Farnham's two famous theatres, The Castle and the Redgrave, we decided that the Redgrave needed a commemorative plaque. Last year FTA persuaded Farnham Town Council, Waverley Borough Council and Crest Nicholson to agree to install a plaque on the wall of Brightwell House to match the one at Zizzi's for The Castle Theatre.

This was achieved together with the backing of The Farnham Society and the Farnham Public Art Trust. However, until the contentious renovations of the house have been carried out, any further news of the installation of the Redgrave plaque is having to be delayed.

Proposed text for Brightwell House plaque

The Castle Theatre plaque was first unveiled in 2001 by the Town Mayor, Cllr. Vic Duckett, with our own Chris Reeks present at the ceremony. However, a later request went to Waverley and Farnham Town Council asking if the plaque could be moved to a more visible position.

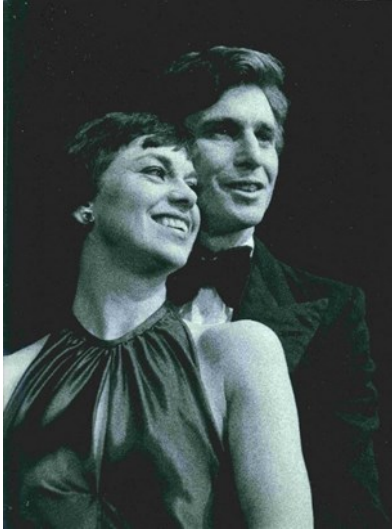
In 2009 the plaque was moved to its present place in the courtyard at the instigation of the Farnham Mayor at the time, Cllr. Gillian Beel. In 2022, the plaque was easily spotted by Dominic Fyfe, to his delight when he visited Farnham after the death of his father, *Last of the Summer Wine* actor Robert Fyfe.



Castle Theatre plaque at Zizzi's

A glittering career

We are sad to announce the death of Christian Roberts, a stalwart of the company in the last days of the Castle Theatre and the early years of the Redgrave



With Elizabeth Seal in *Cowardy Custard*



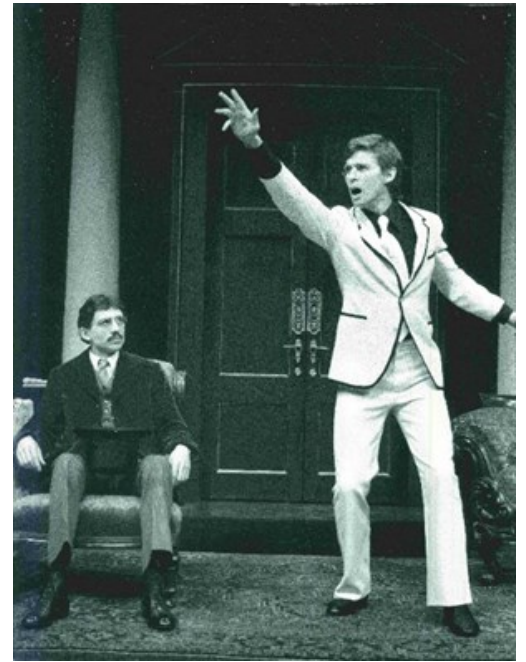
With Helen Dorward in *A Flea in her Ear*

Christian came to Farnham after a glittering career in films (including *To Sir with Love* with Sidney Poitier, *The Anniversary* with Bette Davis and *The Last Valley* with Michael Caine) to appear in *Flea in Her Ear* and *Free as Air* at the Castle Theatre.

In the opening season of the Redgrave he will be remembered for Paris in *Romeo and Juliet*, Jack Chesney in *Charley's Aunt* and Cliff in *Cabaret* opposite Zoe Wanamaker. He appeared at the Redgrave many times, notably as Jack Worthing in *The Importance of Being Earnest* and Tristan Tzara in *Travesties* in 1977. He went on to achieve great success in the musical *Return to the Forbidden Planet* in which he created the role of Dr. Prospero.

In later years he moved to Barbados where he founded the famous restaurant and hotel *The Lone Star*. On returning to the UK his latter years were dogged by ill health and he died at home in Frith End. He is survived by his wife Christine, his children Lucy and Ben and his grandchildren.

With thanks for the obituary by Chris Reeks and the photographs from our archive selected by Peter Hunter.



As Tristan Tzara in *Travesties*



Rehearsing for *Cabaret* with Zoe Wanamaker

Advance notice of your FTA Membership dues.

Yes, it's that time of year again coming around so we are giving everyone advance notice. You will see that these fees are modest and unchanged in our wish to help all.

Your FTA Membership dues are shortly required please from the **1st of April**. Ideally we would prefer that they

are not paid in advance of this date, as that complicates the book-keeping.

Please make a note in your diaries to make this transfer after 1st April, by BACS as per the details below, or alternatively send a cheque to Peter Hunter, Treasurer, c/o 4 Nutshell Lane, Farnham, Surrey GU9 0HG

BACS details

Sort code 60-08-15

a/c no. 59103205

If you pay by BACS please use your name as a reference.

Thank you.

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