The Riverside Arts Centre 1898

In 1898 59 Thames St was not the Riverside Arts Centre but The Assembly Rooms.

Recently a keen-eyed member of the Sunbury and Shepperton Local History Society spotted this poster on ebay.

Shown here is only the upper half of the poster which actually measures 7 by 22 inches.

The lower half shows a second play, ROBERT MACAIRE a drama in two acts set in France.

The original poster is much darker than this and has been cleverly photographed so as to be mainly legible.

Seats for this performance were:-
Front Rows 3/-
Reserved Seats 2/-
Back Seats 1/-
Admission 6d

Where 1/- (one shilling) is worth about £5.50 in today’s money.

We are indebted to the Local History Society for allowing us to include this interesting document.
The well-known LONDON DRAMATIC COMPANY presented an evening of dramatic entertainment at The Assembly Rooms in Thames Street on Saturday 8th January 1898. The details of this event are contained on an old poster which has been recently acquired by Sunbury and Shepperton Local History Society. The poster is too fragile to put on display, so the society has kindly provided us with a photograph which will be on display in the Bar during December and January. Do come and see what entertainment was provided at our Centre 118 years ago. Very few documents recording the early days of no. 59 Thames Street remain, so this is a rare find.

I have in mind creating a small permanent exhibition of photographs recording the building's past. Do you have any hidden away that we could use? I would be interested to hear from anyone who would like to help with this project.

Returning to more domestic matters, our sub-contractors completed the re-decoration of The Studio in September. It is looking very smart. As you will read in this newsletter, plans for all our group's Christmas Celebrations are well advanced. The Trustees and the Officers join me in wishing you all a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy and prosperous New Year at Riverside Arts Centre.

Eric Champion: Hon Chairman:
(Tel: 01932 782850)

SHEPPERTON PLAYERS

Dick Whittington tells the rags to riches tale of a young man and his cat on an exciting quest for fame and fortune but will the evil King Rat thwart his plans or will Fairy Bowbells save the day? All will be revealed (if you didn’t know)

Come along and chase away the winter blues by cheering the hero and hissing the villain, chuckling at the corny jokes and letting them know “It’s behind you” – Oh, yes it is! Persons of a nervous disposition are advised to come accompanied by a young relative.

Among those appearing are long time members of the Centre, Clive Tibbits and Ron Millinger. Music is provided by Colin Lewis and his boys and dancers by courtesy of the KH Dance Academy. Early booking, especially for the matinee is highly recommended.

The performances take place at 8pm on Wednesday 13th to Saturday 16th January 2016 with a matinee performance on the Saturday at 2:30pm. Tickets are £10 per person and can be obtained from the box office on 07505 206757. Tickets can also be obtained on line and at the door subject of course to availability. Further details can be found on www.sheppertonplayers.org.uk

CHAIRMAN’S COLUMN

The Editor’s notes

The next Centre appears in March 2016. The deadline for contributions will be Sunday 14th February for news, views and future events in March, April and May 2016. I especially like photos! If the contributor for your group has an e-mail address, please let me know, so that I can send them a reminder about a fortnight before the deadline.

My telephone is 01932 782788, e-mail thecentre.rac@gmail.com or put copy on the notice board at RAC

Posters can be put on the RAC website, send (in PDF format) to riversidearts59@gmail.com

Christine

December 2015
Congratulations again to Riverside Youth Theatre!

The challenge for our cast at this year’s Spelthorne Drama Festival was to play a working class couple and their 18 year old daughter. Easy right? Oh wait, we forgot to say this working class family were from Yorkshire and the play was set in the 1960’s (30 years before our cast were even born) Not so easy now right? However our cast of Nick Hardie, Georgia Mooney and Georgie Mason Mottram made it look just that. Their performances in “A Grave Situation”, a northern fairy tale written by our very own Viv Lake, were so convincing that we forgot they were 3 teenagers from 2015 Sunbury on Thames.

Nick Hardie, Georgia Mooney and Georgie Mason Mottram, the cast of A Grave Situation with author Viv Lake.

We were extremely proud of our whole cast being nominated for the “Most Promising Youth Player” award and special congratulations to Nick for winning that award! And we would like to thank Viv Lake for writing a brilliantly ludicrous yet comically plausible play and our hard-working back stage and technical teams for all their help. All that effort was not in vain as it got us nominations for the “Backstage” award and “Best youth play”. All in all a very successful festival for RYT, long may the success continue!

And we’re sure it will as all involved with RYT are hard at work creating yet another impressive winter production; this year it will be an adaptation of Hans Christian Anderson’s legendary tale “The Snow Queen”, directed by Carole Dow assisted by Emma Heaton and Alex Alderson. There are going to be some fantastic effects to get you in the festive mood, and with a very hard working cast, it’s going to be one not to miss! Great for kids and adults alike, come along to RAC on December 10th-12th and see RYT’s beautiful version of this classic story… you will be impressed!

Our tech team have had a busy autumn even without the upcoming show. Working very hard throughout the Drama Festival, they once again showed the adults how it should be done. They had a trip to local special fx and costume company FBFX where they saw some incredible costumes being created for some very top secret films, and saw the camera rig at Shepperton Studios that has made 3D computer versions of A-listers including Daniel Craig and Hugh Jackman. Unfortunately neither of them were present for our trip, but it’s given the tech team something to aspire to!
September commenced with another session of Poems by Numbers, a game of chance in the selection of poems. Again an intriguing variety of verse included Ezra Pound and Robbie Burns (excellent and amusing rendition by the reader) along with rarely heard poems by Norman McCaig and Ben Johnson.

Entitled "Inspired or Insane" in October Colin Hurrell (chairman) presented verse from poets who had suffered some form of mental instability or poor health. The former included poetry by John Clare (the "peasant" poet), Sara Teasedale (American lyrical poet), Sylvia Plath (flawed genius) and Robert Lowell (manic depressive). Romantic poet John Keats died of tuberculosis in his twenties and the great epic poet Walt Whitman was plagued with ill health throughout his life. Whether Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron can be included in the general grouping is open to doubt. However undoubtedly both were definitely inspired in their writing.

The next month in "Times Remembered" members produced poems personal to themselves or a particular poet's recollections. Schooldays were invoked and poems learned by rote like John Masefield's "Cargoes" pleasantly recalled, less so one member's account of Robert Browning's "How They Brought the Good News from Ghent To Aix" forced upon him when aged eight! Reflections on visits to Laugharne, Stoke Poges and Ireland were also chosen. Perhaps the most poignant contribution was the poem "Walking Away" by C.Day Lewis in which he described his son leaving home and the acceptance of a child growing up.

There is no meeting in January.

Seven members of Sunbury Book Circle joined forces on 17 July to present an informative session about literary Americans who had spent a significant period of their lives living and working abroad.

Daphne Mendelski read from The Innocents Abroad by Mark Twain and included a highly amusing piece in which Twain expressed his antipathy for the universal popularity of Michelangelo.

Gill Neil talked about Henry James, who was largely educated outside America and settled first in London, then Rye, East Sussex, before becoming a British citizen.

The subject of how to escape poverty and marry a rich man was covered by Pat Hallahan, who talked about Edith Wharton and read from her novel, The House of Mirth.

Ernest Hemingway was the subject of Pat Douthwaite’s contribution. She discussed the author’s rich literary life in Paris using illustrations from his Short Stories and novel, A Moveable Feast.

Christine Norgate's contribution was on Scott Fitzgerald. She made particular reference to his love of excess which was indulged at less cost when living in Paris, rather than America. It was in that city that his best known novel, The Great Gatsby, was written.

Sylvia Plath moved to Cambridge in 1955 in search of education. During her time in Britain Plath wrote 1,000 letters to her mother. This was one of many facts revealed by Marion Robertson as she talked about the ups and downs of Plath's life with the writer Ted Hughes. She used the Letters of Sylvia Plath as illustration.

Finally, Moira Mulvaney talked about Barbara Kingsolver, explaining how the writer's scientific background and extensive experience of living abroad as a child informed her body of work. Moira read from the writer's novel, Lacuna.

The meeting was organised by Pat Douthwaite, who undertook a great deal of research in preparation for the afternoon for which she was warmly thanked.

After the summer break we welcomed Frances Hughes, an experienced lecturer in Art and History to speak about the plays of Somerset Maugham.

Maugham, by far the youngest son of the family was born in the British Embassy in Paris, British soil. Both his parents died while he was young and he was brought up by his unfeeling uncle, a vicar in Whitstable, Kent.

While studying medicine at St Thomas’ he discovered the theatre and after writing a best selling novel, Liza of Lambeth, he became a full time author.

More novels and plays followed, the plays all being written before 1934. He collected theatrical paintings which he gave to the National Theatre and are now exhibited in Bath. Maugham lived in the South of France and became a fashionable host.

Will his work be remembered? Frances Hughes considered the most likely book to be Of Human Bondage, largely regarded as autobiographical and a number of plays are still being staged.
Our November demonstration was given by Rebecer Tiller. It was her first demonstration after passing her N.A.F.A.S. test and proved a baptism of fire, as she had to contend with low-flying aircraft and a recalcitrant microphone. However, she rose to the occasion and triumphed over all adversity and entertained us with her amusing talk and floristry skills. I am sure she will be in great demand over the forthcoming Festive Season.

The "Strictly" dancers are not the only ones travelling to Blackpool in November. The N.A.F.A.S. National Show will be there before them. Good luck to all our Members taking part.

Everyone in Sunbury Flower Club wish all Groups at Riverside a Very Happy Christmas and A Healthy Happy and Successful 2016

FROM ORCHARD TO ARTS CENTRE

A Brief History of 59 Thames St, Sunbury
By Pat Champion and David de Jersey, published 1993

Almost contemporary with the newly found poster are the following extracts from 'From Orchard to Arts Centre'...

In the edition of 27th May 1893 published in the Lock to Lock Times - a periodical magazine which concentrated on matters pertaining to the river, but nevertheless managed on occasions to review the theatre scene, the following appeared:-

The pleasant little riparian village of Sunbury has recently, thanks to the enterprise of Messrs Gough and Dove, become possessed of a hall which will play a prominent part in the future life of the village. This hall, which will seat 300 comfortably, was opened by the well known comedian, Charles Collette, who paid the directorate the high compliment of saying that it was the best hall of its size that he had ever played in. The stage measures 23 ft by 15 ft and is fitted with a handsome silk plush curtain and a very elegant proscenium. There is also a grand piano by Collard and Collard, and there are dressing rooms for ladies and gentlemen, while the fire hydrant arrangements comprise all the latest improvements. The floor is covered end to end in matting, so that it shall be kept in the best of good order for winter dances, cinderellas, and such like, though, as it has been fully licensed by the Middlesex County Council, there will, no doubt, be a great demand for the hall for private theatricals, which are very fashionable in the neighbourhood.

The Surrey Comet advertised to take place on Wednesday 30th August 1893 a recital by the Celebrated Field-Fisher Quartette, including Spanish Dances, Quartets, Solos, Recitations and performances on the Mandolin, Guitar and Castanet, and on the Friday and Saturday there were Diaramic Entertainments: a Tour in the Channel Islands on the Friday and England to America and the World's Fair, Chicago on the Saturday. (A Diorama being a scenic representation with lighting effects.)

The Field-Fisher Quartet received a glowing review in the following edition of the Surrey Comet, and returned to the assembly rooms on Wednesday 6th December 1893. Added attractions on that occasion were Vocal Gavotte and Tableaux, Silent Recitals.
Set in 1951, White Carnation by RC Sherriff was Shepperton Players’ October Production. A full critical review appears on www.sheppertonplayers.org.uk. But I should like to write about a deliciously funny scene in the play which appealed particularly to those of us who lived through post-war rationing.

John Greenwood, owner of a ruined house re-appears just before the developers move in, but is he real or is he a ghost?

The local police send for the vicar who arrives to confront the suspect bearing a hold-all. A comic scene then ensues in which Steve Lewis, a solid apparition tries to determine the contents of the hold-all suspecting that it contains some symbolic form to exorcise him and the vicar, played by Eric Champion, is constantly prevaricates. Eventually we find out that in the hold-all is not after all an instrument of exorcism but a bunch of bananas - no doubt straight from the black market!

Super set, intelligent direction by Emma Dow and some fine performances by other members of the cast completed an enjoyable evening.

Christine Norgate
**Are you Interested in developing the Arts?**

The Sunbury & Shepperton Arts Association is looking for one or two people to be its Chair / Co-Chair

The SSAA promotes morning Coffee Concerts at the Riverside Arts Centre on Saturday mornings in the winter months and has organised an Arts Festival in the summer. It also puts on and other events from time to time as they arise. For example, in 2014 we hosted ‘The Restoration of Nell Gwyn’, an excellent show.

Our current Co-Chairs feel that it is time for them to retire and let other people take the SSAA forward. Your plans for the SSAA will shape its future.

To apply, contact Catherine Black (email: catherineblack1@hotmail.com) and/or Carmen Souchet (email: souchet25a@gmail.com).

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**Laughing Chili Comedy Night**

**December 2015 – 05/12/15**

With our last comedy night before Christmas, Laughing Chili brings another 5 great acts to Sunbury. Our headliner Gerry K is truly a feel-good act, with an energetic and likeable personality, and has a beaming smile that warms up the coldest of nights.

Join us at the bar first and then for a great night of comedy in The Studio on Saturday 5th December.

- 16+ only. Show may contain themes and language of an adult nature.
- Doors and bar open from 7.30pm. Show starts prompt at 8.30pm.
- Tickets from £12, and more information from www.laughingchili.co.uk

**February 2016 – 06/02/16**

After a break for January, Laughing Chili comes crashing back in 2016 with another top night of comedy. Check out the line-up for this night, as well as the rest of the year, on our website at www.laughingchili.co.uk

Join us at the bar first and then for a great night of comedy in The Studio on Saturday 6th February.

- 16+ only. Show may contain themes and language of an adult nature.
- Doors and bar open from 7.30pm. Show starts prompt at 8.30pm.
- Tickets from £12, and more information from www.laughingchili.co.uk

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**KH Dance Academy**

Providing dance classes for ages 3 years through to Adults specializing in RAD Ballet, ISTD Tap & Modern and Adult Tap, Ballet and Keep Fit classes.

Weekly classes held in Sunbury-on-Thames with Adults classes on Tuesdays and children's classes on Saturdays held at the Riverside Arts Centre.

**Spring Term 5th January - 24th March 2016**

February Half Term 15th - 21st February (no classes this week)

For further detail contact: Kathryn Cameron-Webb 07891 675 753

info@kh-danceacademy.co.uk  www.kh-danceacademy.co.uk
**Saturday 5th December at 7.30 for 8.30pm**

**Laughing Chili Comedy Night**
Headliner Gerry K
Doors and bar open from 7.30pm. Show starts prompt at 8.30pm.
Tickets from £12, more info from www.laughingchili.co.uk
16+ only. Show may contain themes and language of an adult nature.

**Thursday 10th - Saturday 12th December, at 8pm**

**Riverside Youth Theatre**

**The Snow Queen**
Adapted by Charles Way from H.C.Anderson
Tickets £8  Box Office: 07871 992 988
or www.riversideyouththeare.co.uk

**Zodiac Musical Society**

**Friday 18th - Saturday 19th December at 7.45pm**
Saturday 19th, matinee at 2.30pm

**Deck the Halls**
Festive songs, Christmas carols, pantomime. mulled wine and mince pies!
£10 evening performances: £8 for the matinee
Box office 01932 220167

**Wednesday 13th to Saturday 16th January at 8pm**

**Shepperton Players**

**Dick Whittington**
By Norman Robbins
Tickets £10  Box Office 07505 206757
Further details from www.sheppertonplayers.org.uk

**Saturday 6th February at 7.30 for 8.30pm**

**Laughing Chili Comedy Night**
Doors and bar open from 7.30pm. Show starts prompt at 8.30pm.
Tickets from £12, more info from www.laughingchili.co.uk
16+ only. Show may contain themes and language of an adult nature.

**Saturday 13th February at 10.15 for 11.00am**

**Sunbury & Shepperton Arts Association**

**Morning Coffee Concert**
Piano Recital
Joseph Tong
Ticket £8.50 (includes coffee and a croissant)
Box Office: 01932 782788

**Saturday 27th February at 2.30pm and 4.15pm**

**KH Dance Academy**

**Spring Variety Show**
For further details contact:
Kathryn Cameron-Webb  07891 675 753