



Photographs: Graham Bennett

IN AT THE GROUND FLOOR ON THE REGENERATION

The transformation of the theatre is already well under way.

The Friends committee was able to see the changes on a visit to the theatre at the beginning of October, courtesy of the contractor Willmott Dixon and the AP trust.

Works scheduled for this year are mostly enabling works, clearing the way for the main construction work. Most significantly, in the foyer, the bricked in arches on the north side have been opened up - eventually allowing, when the arches on the south side are opened again - views through the foyer from East Court on to the north of Alexandra Park.

Inside the auditorium, some walls under the balcony have been removed, but the main change is the removal of the floor - each board carefully numbered and stored.

Underneath, in what looks like an archaeological dig, the supporting walls, the length of the auditorium, have been revealed and many of them are in arched sections. Most of these walls have to be removed and replaced with new concrete support platings to bear more weight and allow the floor to be levelled up, for multi-use of the space. This and the other major works should begin by the new year.



FRIENDS HAVE A SEAT IN THE HOUSE

The Friends committee at its October meeting agreed to help AP's £1m match funding drive with a £900 donation, by sponsoring a seat in the revamped balcony. The seat will carry a plaque in the name of the Friends of the Theatre. The Palace's fundraising effort was launched at the end of the summer, focusing on the theatre, but has now also included the BBC Studios, to coincide with the 80th anniversary of the launch of the BBC's pioneering television service on 2nd November 1936.

More at support.alexandrapalace.com

2016 AGM hears from new CEO

The well-attended AGM in May gave Friends the first opportunity to meet and hear Louise Stewart, the new chief executive of the AP trust, outline the progress of the regeneration project, and her vision for the future of the whole Palace.

The meeting also approved two proposed changes to the constitution: one adds a membership secretary to the committee, to help manage the surge in members and supporters; the other recognises that we now operate our own bank account, separate from the Palace.

The new Friends committee for 2016-17 is: chair - Nigel Willmott, secretary - Patricia Brearey, treasurer - Imogen Pennell, press and publicity - Graham Bennett, members - Louise Blair, Jacob O'Callaghan and Helen Padley. Cllr Bob Hare is nominated to the committee by the AP board. Richard Smith and Carl Bryan are co-opted members.



Emma Dagnes (2nd from left), Louise Stewart (6th from left) with the members of the FAPT committee.

LILLIE LANGTRY, H BEERBOHM TREE AND TWO THEATRES

Alexandra Park and Palace, A History, an excellent book by Ron Carrington, refers to Mrs Langtry, H Beerbohm Tree and the Princes Theatre Company in the stage play *Peril* at the Alexandra Palace Theatre in June 1885.

Intrigued by this, but frustrated by not finding many more details of it, an online search was made of The British Newspaper Archive. There, in *The Era* of Saturday 6th June 1885, was an advert for a performance by Mrs Langtry and the Prince's Theatre Company of *Peril* at the Alexandra Palace Theatre on Thursday 11th June at 3pm.

In a microfilm copy of the Tottenham and Edmonton Weekly Herald in Haringey Archives, at Bruce Castle Museum, there is a less detailed advert for the show on the same day; but the two sources together are very helpful.

But why only one performance, particularly when Carrington appears to suggest this production was successful in London?

The Era of 6th June 1885 at The British Newspaper Archive also printed an



advert for the Prince's Theatre, Coventry Street, in which Mrs Langtry is head-lined performing with H Beerbohm Tree and a named cast in *Peril*, an adaptation by BC Stephenson and Clement Scott of Sardou's *Nos Intimes*, each evening at 8.45pm.

Peril appears to have started at the Prince's Theatre on Monday 6th April 1885; and *The Era* of Saturday

11th April, at The British Newspaper Archive, carries a positive critique and a detailed cast list including Mrs Langtry as Lady Ormond and H Beerbohm Tree as Sir Woodbine Grafton. The run of shows appears to have ended on Friday 3rd July 1885 according to *The Era* of Saturday 4th July, at The British Newspaper Archive.

Perhaps this suggests that this billing of *Peril* at the Alexandra Palace Theatre was intended as a one-off afternoon performance there, before the usual evening performance at the Prince's Theatre.

We are yet to find a programme or a review of this for the Alexandra Palace Theatre. If you know of these please let us know: mail@fapt.org.uk.

Acknowledgements: The *Era* articles: Newspaper transcript (c) The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to The British Newspaper Archive (www.BritishNewspaperArchive.co.uk).

Tottenham and Edmonton Weekly Herald; and Alexandra Park and Palace, A History by Ron Carrington (London 1975): at and with thanks to Haringey Archives, Bruce Castle Museum.

Lillie Langtry photograph: The National Archives UK, William Downey.

NANCY MCMILLAN ACTRESS AT THE PALACE

We were delighted to see a fully illustrated article in the Ham & High (17.08.2016), recalling performances at the Alexandra Palace Theatre in the 1920s by the actress, Nancy McMillan (1889-1976). She appeared in at least nine productions at the Theatre, playing the leading lady in musical comedies and operettas performed by The Alexandra Palace Operatic and Dramatic Society between 1923 and 1930.

FAPT first learned of Nancy McMillan's career at Alexandra Palace when her granddaughter, Mary Wells, contacted us three years ago, wishing to share a trove of photographs, theatre programmes and reviews she had discovered after the actress's death. Some of these interesting items accompany the article.

If any reader has information or artefacts relating to other past performers or aspects of the Alexandra Palace Theatre's history, please contact us via our email address mail@fapt.org.uk.

FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS The Friends continue to grow, with many new members signing up at events during the year. We now have over 800 Friends and supporters, and we are sure our numbers will increase rapidly as the Theatre regeneration progresses. Do spread the word!

FILMS BY THE FRIENDS COMING SOON

'Alexandra Palace Theatre encapsulates the history of popular entertainment over the last 150 years.'

So says Nigel Willmott, Chair of the Friends of Alexandra Palace Theatre. He was talking on camera for a new series of films being made by the Friends about the history of the theatre. Each film will be 2 - 3 minutes long and cover a single topic. The first two, to be launched shortly on the Friends' website, will feature the recent restoration work and the iconic design of the auditorium. Later films - ranging from the design of the stage to the performances held in the theatre, will be released over the coming months. As a Member, you will be the first to be able to see them, with an exclusive link to stream or download every film as they are released.