



FRIENDS OF THE ALEXANDRA PALACE THEATRE

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2017



A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY!

Wednesday 31st May

The 2017 AGM of the Friends will once again take place in the splendid Londesborough Room just off the Palm Court in the West Wing. Come along for registration and light refreshments at 7pm and the AGM will start at 7.30pm.

Our guest speakers will include Louise Stewart, CEO at AP who will tell us about her plans for an exciting opening season in 2018.

JOINING OUR COMMITTEE?

A committee of volunteers, meeting about once a month, runs the Friends. Many have worked tirelessly over the years to save the extraordinary Victorian Theatre at the Palace.

We welcome new members onto the Committee, particularly if you have experience in theatre and the arts or looking after and communicating with a large group of members, or database management.

If you are interested, please email Nigel Willmott on nwillmott@blueyonder.co.uk, or come up and introduce yourself before the start of the AGM on Wednesday May 31st.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE BARRIERS?

The Friends committee was given a tour of the theatre at the end of February to see the progress on the regeneration works.

The main development since our previous visit before Christmas was the amount of work done on the new floor. The Victorian brickwork piers have now been removed, apart from some small areas left for heritage reasons, and new, stronger concrete foundations installed. It is hoped that the new concrete apron will be laid by the end of April.

The original floorboards will then be restored on top of the flat, levelled floor.

The committee was also given a presentation by Emma Dagnes, the deputy CEO of Alexandra Palace, on the details of the major regeneration works package, and her team's developing plans for operating the theatre when it opens in late summer 2018. The major works programme is expected to start in May.

Louise will give an update to members at the AGM.



Friends chair Nigel Willmott and secretary Pat Brearey, co-authors of *Drama at the Palace*, the history of the Victorian years in the theatre, took the message to a wider audience with a talk to the Edmonton Hundred historical society in Enfield on March 15. The book is still available on Amazon at £8.50, or on the Friends website to members at £7.

RUBBLE RUBBLE ...

During the regeneration works in the Theatre, in December last year there was a fascinating find, the origin of which still eludes us.



Photograph: Pat Brearey

While works were taking place to the floor of a balcony-like structure with doors, believed to have been added in 1920s refurbishment, a section of concrete floor was removed, to unexpectedly reveal pieces of decorated plasterwork underneath; building rubble, which appears to have been used as infill. As much as possible of this decorated plasterwork was carefully saved. Had it been part of the Theatre?

The decorated plaster may not have come from Alexandra Palace originally at all. And if it had, which Alexandra Palace? Perhaps it was from the existing Theatre, first opened 1875.

The Theatre's current decoration, which doesn't seem to match the rubble, is believed to date from the 1920s. A 1928 Alexandra Palace Magazine suggests there was decoration that year. In 1922 there were "alterations and redecorations", noted in a 1923 Theatre programme, but with no mention of colours.

Some colours of the Theatre in 1916 have been preserved in a work of art created by George Kenner. Some

colours in this Kenner art do seem to match some of those on the plaster; but in Kenner's portrayal the pattern on the pieces is not visible. Kenner's representation can be seen on the Imperial War Museum website <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/15069>

The Theatre was decorated in late 1909/early 1910, according to reports in The Hornsey and Finsbury Park Journal, with "passages" "recoloured" and "walls repapered". Perhaps it is this decoration that is seen in Kenner's art.

By May 1901 the Theatre was "thoroughly overhauled and decorated" according to The Municipal Journal. An 1875 description of decoration as "of a more subdued character than in other portions of the Palace" from The Era also lacks details of colour.



With permission from Willmott Dixon

So the mystery remains! If you can help solve it please let us know mail@fapt.org.uk

With thanks to:

Willmott Dixon: Photograph of decorated plaster.
Alexandra Palace: Information about the find.
Haringey Archives, Bruce Castle Museum: Municipal Journal 10.05.1901;
Hornsey and Finsbury Park Journal 25.02.1910; 11.03.1910;
Alexandra Palace Magazine, Vol 2, No 9, Sept 1928; Cinderella programme 10.01.1923
Imperial War Museum: Link to George Kenner painting.
The British Newspaper Archive (www.BritishNewspaperArchive.co.uk):
The Era 09.05.1875: Newspaper transcript (c) The British Library Board. All rights reserved.



CHECK THE LATEST AP VIDEO

The latest short video about the history of the theatre is now on the Friends' YouTube page.

This one is:

Facts, figures, heating and toilets.
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCajybyAEYU0hr_cRiLBvW9A

The series will be continuing through the Spring and Summer and the site will regularly be updated. If you'd like to be notified automatically each time a new video is released, you can click on the 'subscribe' tab on our page - it's really like joining a mailing list

We welcome your feedback and suggestions for new videos on things you'd like to know about the theatre.

THE FUTURE OF THE FRIENDS

None of the committee has a crystal ball to see into the future, but we are thinking about how the Friends might change after the Theatre opens. We have published some thoughts in a paper on our website but we welcome members ideas and input, so please tell us what you think on mail@fapt.org.uk

ALEXANDRA PALACE

FUNDRAISING FOR THE THEATRE.

Alexandra Palace is aiming to raise £1 million towards the regeneration from business and the community and to find out how you might be able to help, go to <http://support.alexandrapalace.com>



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