

THE NEW

# Public Hall and Institute, HENLEY-IN-ARDEN.

## OPENING PERFORMANCES

Monday Afternoon, January 4th, at 2-30.

Tuesday Evening, January 5th, at 7-30.

Wednesday Evening, January 6th, at 7-30.

### PRICES OF ADMISSION—

*At Opening Performance on Monday Afternoon, January 4th.*

RESERVED SEATS **3/-** AND **2/-**.

UNRESERVED SEATS **1/-**. GALLERY **6d.**

(Doors open at 2 o'clock.)

*At Evening Performances on January 5th and 6th.*

RESERVED SEATS **2/6**.

UNRESERVED SEATS **1/-**. GALLERY **6d.**

(Doors open at 7 o'clock.)

Seats may be booked on and after Tuesday, December 1st, at MR. ROBERT HERRING'S, 98, High Street, Henley-in-Arden, where plans of the Hall may be seen.

Applications by post may also be addressed to MR. ROBERT HERRING and will be promptly attended to, but must in all cases be accompanied by a remittance.

Intending visitors are requested to apply for seats early, as the accommodation is limited.

## Oscar Asche and Lily Brayton

In one or more Scenes from

### The Taming of the Shrew

As played by them over 600 times in London and the Provinces.

At Opening Performance on Monday Afternoon, Jan. 4th only.

## Compromising Martha.

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

by

**KEBLE HOWARD**

(J. KEBLE BELL).

As played at the Haymarket Theatre for 245 performances.

Notes from the Author of the Play - Ray Evans

As a *regular* user of the Memorial Hall as a member of the Henley in Arden Drama Society, I, more than most, appreciate just what a wonderful gift it is to have such a facility within the bounds of the town.

Indeed without the Hall, amateur theatre in Henley would not exist, or would have to be conducted 'out-of-town' - some might say a preferable option!

So I was moved to record the Hall's one hundredth anniversary by writing a play based on the week or so leading up to the formal opening, on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1908 and, more especially, the inaugural theatrical performance on the afternoon of Monday the 4<sup>th</sup> of January 1909.

When I began to research the subject, it became clear that I was unearthing a 'cultural' revolution in terms of the impact on such a small Warwickshire market town.

Perhaps the most breathtaking event of the theatrical afternoon was that the "Posh & Becks" of the period agreed to open the Hall with an excerpt from their long running and highly successful production of *Taming of the Shrew* at His Majesty's Theatre, London. No less than Mr Oscar Asche and Miss Lily Brayton.

Hot on their heels, another luminary of the time, Mr Keble Howard a very successful author-playwright, agreed to stage his current comedy, *Compromising Martha*, fresh from the stage of the Haymarket Theatre, London, at the same event.

Competition was made all the more fierce by the fact that Keble Howard aka John Keble Bell, was brought up in Henley, one of twelve children of Mrs and the Reverend George Edward Bell, incumbent at St John's in Henley from 1876 to 1914.

Finally, keeping the 'professionals' on their toes, our very own, newly formed Henley Drama & Operatic Society, entered the



arena with their rendition of *Trial by Jury*, by kind permission of Mrs D'Oyly Carte.

1 / So, it must have caused some anxiety to Dr Ernest Nelson, the man who's inspiration and driving force, had led to the opening of the Hall, when he had to choose the bill running order. His final choice is what makes the play so intriguing.

Victoria was still deeply missed and the country was still in the grip of a dark and immovable mourning so, any good news was welcomed with a huge display of enthusiastic fervour.

On a national scale, the good news for folk reaching the age of *seventy* was that, thanks to Lloyd George, they were to receive a weekly pension of five shillings (25p) wow!

At a local level, 1909 was the year that Johnson's started in business and 'opened' up the trails to such exotic destinations as Birmingham, Stratford, Warwick and Leamington.

So, with the prospect of war in Europe an ever growing threat, people needed a fillip, and the folk of Henley got theirs in spades!

P3 As already mentioned, Oscar Asche and Lily Brayton were 'hot' property and both the official opening of the Hall and the first stage performances were given *enormous coverage* by the Stratford Herald.

The contributing journalists hurled superlatives around like confetti in a bid to 'large-up' the event, and I list just a few passages for your enjoyment:-

**Stratford Herald 31<sup>st</sup> December 1908 -**

P4 "The concert hall is a spacious room, capable of seating 430 and is well lighted. The walls are coloured in a pleasing tone with dado, and the ceiling is match-boarded, which of course, improves the acoustic properties. The stage, 69 ft by 28 ft, is constructed on modern principals with inclined floor, the

electric system of incandescent lighting; known as Telphos has been adopted. There is also a substantial gallery, a commodious reading room, a billiard room handsomely fitted up and upholstered, while a rifle range, 92 ft by 8 ft wide, runs along one side"

And of the performance of *The Taming of the Shrew*:-

**Stratford Herald 8<sup>th</sup> January 1909 -**

"Mr Asche's Petruchio was one of much merit, a performance which satisfied Shakespearean scholars, and will long live in the memory. Miss Lily Brayton's Katherine deserves the highest praise and she enacted the scene with requisite forcefulness. Mr and Mrs Asche belong to that class of people, perhaps not numerous, who receive pleasure from giving pleasure to others"

The opening of the *Public Hall, Institute and Rifle Range* was probably the most significant event to have taken in place in Henley since the granting of the rights to hold a market by Henry VI in 1449.

And at the formal opening on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1908, the dignitaries numbered the Marchioness of Hertford, Sir Frederick Lance, Sir Henry Fairfax-Lucy, Sir William Jaffray and the then High Bailiff Mr C Couchman along with a list of at least one hundred other officers and professionals from in and around the area.

As for the local hero Keble Howard (aka John Keble Bell) he wrote later in his autobiography *My Motley Life* - "I once had the honour of appearing on the same stage as Oscar Asche and his company, though not in the same play. This was the opening performance of the Public Hall at Henley in Arden, where my father was the vicar. The doctor (Dr Ernest Nelson) was a great friend of Asche's, and invited him to do a scene from the *Taming of the Shrew* at the opening show. He also asked me to do *Compromising Martha* which I did, taking a company down from London. I was naturally very nervous at appearing in my 'home town' and very nearly dried up. I had

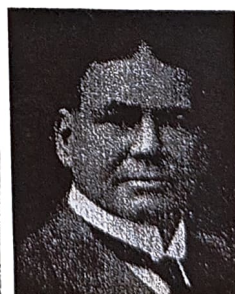


just started on my first lines when I saw Oscar Asche facing me in the prompt corner, and regarding me with what looked like critical ferocity. However, all was well; we stayed for three days, and played to packed and enthusiastic audiences”

At this time in my research and writing it was clear that there must have been some clash of egos between the ‘London’ thespians and the local home grown talent, and my plot was now clear.

I have dealt with the subject as historically accurate as it is possible to be, but the outcome is fashioned using theatrical licence to conjure up what may have happened if all had not gone according to plan. In actual fact, according to the Stratford Herald, the opening did go without a hitch. Not so for the Herald however, who on Friday the 15<sup>th</sup> of January were forced to print an apology to the local amateur group as follows: -

“Last week we commented upon the admirable manner in which Gilbert and Sullivan’s comic opera *Trial by Jury* was produced by local amateurs. Inadvertently the names of some ladies were omitted from the chorus. (The missing performers were listed) They were designated the ‘Spectators’ and we are afraid that we did not see them from the position we occupied. We regret the omission”



Oscar, Keble, Lily and Dr Nelson

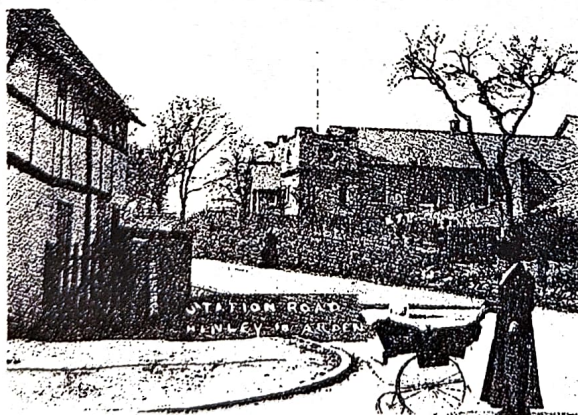
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# **HENLEY IN ARDEN DRAMA SOCIETY**

**Proudly Present**

**A new play by Ray Evans**

## **A VERY PUBLIC HALL**



**To celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
of the opening of the Memorial Hall**

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# **A Very Public Hall**

**Written by Ray Evans**

The play takes place between December 23<sup>rd</sup> 1908 to 4<sup>th</sup> January 1909 within the brand new Public Hall and Institution, Station Road, Henley.

## **Act I**

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <b>Scene 1</b> | <b>Wednesday December 23<sup>rd</sup> 1908</b><br>The Project is Completed |
| <b>Scene 2</b> | <b>Saturday December 26<sup>th</sup> 1908</b><br>The Son of Henley Returns |
| <b>Scene 3</b> | <b>Monday December 28<sup>th</sup> 1908</b><br>Star stuck Mary             |
| <b>Scene 4</b> | <b>Wednesday December 30<sup>th</sup> 1908</b><br>The Cultural Luddites    |
| <b>Scene 5</b> | <b>Wednesday December 30<sup>th</sup> 1908</b><br>A Concerned Father       |
| <b>Scene 6</b> | <b>Saturday January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1909</b><br>Oscar's Arrival (AM)        |
| <b>Scene 7</b> | <b>Saturday January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1909</b><br>Mary's First Rehearsal (PM) |
| <b>Scene 8</b> | <b>Sunday January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1909</b><br>Oscar's Rehearsal (AM)        |
| <b>Scene 9</b> | <b>Sunday January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1909</b><br>Oscar Meets D'Oyly Carte (PM) |

## **Act II**

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <b>Scene 1</b> | <b>Monday January 4<sup>th</sup> 1909</b><br>The Inaugural Performance   |
| <b>Scene 2</b> | <b>Monday January 4<sup>th</sup> 1909</b><br>The Wooing Scene<br>The Taming of the Shrew<br>By William Shakespeare |
| <b>Scene 3</b> | <b>Monday January 4<sup>th</sup> 1909</b><br>The Finale  |



**(Main Play)**

**Tom Walcott**  
**John Adder**  
**Dr Ernest Nelson**  
**Sir William Jaffray**  
**Keble Howard**  
**Mary Dunn**  
**Fannie Bottley**  
**Minnie Newman**  
**Charles Dunn**  
**Oscar Asche**  
**Lily Brayton**  
**Oscar's Actors/Actress**

**Rod Hinton  
Paul Thomson  
Alan Harrison  
Alan Nicholls  
Phil Walker  
Sheena Ison  
Eunice Bagshaw  
Tracy Humphreys  
Fred Dowling  
Phil Bonson  
Rosie Hammond  
See Taming of the Shrew**

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## Trial by Jury

**Bridesmaids**  
Carol Robson  
Kate Castle  
Rebecca Shaw  
Krystyna Aukstolis  
Tracy Humphreys  
Bev Reynolds  
**Judge**  
Fred Dowling

## Pianist

# Jane Cawdrey

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## Taming of the Shrew

**Petruchio**  
**Katherine**  
**Bianca**  
**Hortensio**  
**Baptista**  
**Gremio**

**Phil Bonson**  
**Rosie Hammond**  
**Rebecca Shaw**  
**Paul Thomson**  
**Alan Nicholls**  
**Rod Hinton**



## **Support Crew**

**Stage Manager**  
**Set Design & Build**  
**Wardrobe**

**Lighting design**  
**Lighting Operator**  
**Sound Operator**

**Prompt**

**Refreshments**

**Bar (Saturday)**

**Front of House**

**Saturday Night Supper**

**Business Manager**

**Box Office**

**Ticket Sales**

**Banner Erection**

**Sue Tootill**

**Ray Evans & HADS team**

**Sue Evans with Carousel**

**Kevin Allen**

**Ian Smedley & Kate Portman**

**John Shuttleworth**

**Mandy Key**

**Marijana Bainbridge & Team**

**Duncan Bainbridge & Team**

**Members & Friends of HADS**

**Sue Dalby & Co.**

**Alan Nicholls**

**John Love**

**Sarah @ The Lemon Tree**

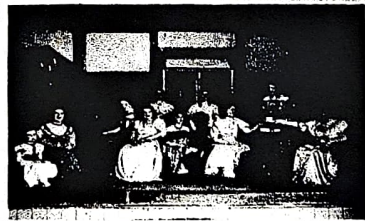
**Bob & Rob**



## **Acknowledgements**

<b>Special Properties</b>	Sue Tootill
	Sue Evans
<b>Musical Director</b>	Carol Robson (G&S)
<b>Treasurer</b>	Brian Hammond
<b>Costumes</b>	Carousel Leamington
<b>Historical Support</b>	Douglas Bridgewater
	Peter Crathorne
	Ray Holding
	The Heritage Centre
<b>The Editor</b>	Henley On-Line News

And thanks to many others who helped stage this show!



### **Directors Notes**

I have endeavoured to echo the historical facts of this momentous occasion as accurately as possible.

However, in order to entertain, I have taken some dramatic licence in both the plot and characterisation.

I therefore apologise to any surviving relatives of the characters portrayed and hope they may take the time to correct me following this production.

Ray Evans - April 2009



## **Chairman's Message**

A warm welcome to friend's old and new, thank you for coming along to support amateur theatre in Henley.

As you have probably guessed by now, the Public/Memorial Hall is one hundred years old and still going strong, playing host to all manner of activities that are the life blood of a community such as Henley.

At this point I would like to pay tribute to the dedication and sheer hard work of two very special people without whom this wonderful hall would not be as we know it today. Namely, Duncan and Marijana Bainbridge and indeed it is thanks to Marijana that we are presenting this particular show tonight.

At a committee meeting just a few months ago she advised us of this momentous anniversary and asked if we could mark the occasion with a special production.

In no time at all, Ray had researched the history of the hall and unearthed this fascinating story of the grand opening and for us to have brought these actual characters back to life and on the very same stage that they performed upon one hundred years ago, has been both exciting and thought provoking.

Special thanks to Ray & Sue Evans for writing and producing this show and, sincere thanks to all the cast members and back stage crew for their hard work.

Finally a mention for our own Bev Reynolds who makes her debut performance on stage in Trial by Jury, please give her your support.

We hope you enjoy the show.

Regards  
Phil Walker

### **Future productions**

HADS will be presenting a very special production of JM Barrie's PETER PAN in August this year in the Guild Hall Gardens for more details go to:-  
[www.hads.org.uk](http://www.hads.org.uk)