



## LATEST NEWS

### Birthday Honours

All lovers of ballet will be delighted that Monica Mason, Director of the Royal Ballet at the Royal Opera House, has been made a Dame in the recent Birthday Honours. In the world of music, there was a Knighthood for Mark Elder, conductor and musical director of Manchester's Halle Orchestra, and I was particularly pleased that Marion Thorpe, who I was at school with and is a brilliant pianist, has received a CBE. Marion is co-founder of the Leeds International Pianoforte Competition. Composer Michael Nyman was awarded a CBE.

In the theatre world, broadcaster Joan Bakewell became a Dame, comedian Des 'Connor a CBE, as well as Victoria Wood, the very popular comedienne and writer. Paul O'Grady, otherwise known as 'Lily Savage', received an MBE, as did June Brown, the much loved 'Dot Branning' in "Eastenders". Russell T. Davies, who is credited with resurrecting "Dr. Who" received an OBE for services to drama.

Congratulations to them all.

### Maryon Lane

Maryon Lane, the former ballerina who played a pivotal role in the emergence of Kenneth MacMillan as the Royal Ballet's choreographer, has died, aged 77.

**Mary-Jane Burcher**

*Founded in 1923 by  
LILIAN BAYLIS CH., M.A. (Oxon) Hon., LL.D. (Birm) Hon.  
Incorporating The Old Vic Association,  
The Old Vic Circle, The Old Vic Club,  
Sadler's Wells Society, Sadler's Wells Circle*

## Guildhall Art Gallery Visit Thursday 11 September

Following our highly successful visit to the Mansion House and at Members' requests, we have arranged a visit to the Guildhall Art Gallery on Thursday 11 September at 2.00pm (please arrive by 1.45pm). The cost of the visit is £6.00. Please send your cheque made payable to the Vic-Wells Association with an SAE to myself at 314B Park Road, London N8 8LA (telephone 0208 352 0492).

**Tim Rooke**

## New Committee Members

At the May 19th meeting of the Vic-Wells Association committee, Kate Smith was appointed to the vacant position of Social Secretary and will be responsible for organising/coordinating our social events and Denise Toovey was appointed to a new position to handle Developments including bringing in new Members and for new initiatives to develop the Vic-Wells Association. The picture shows James and Joy Ranger talking to Denise and her son, on the left, and Kate on the right.



### The Vic-Wells Association

The OLD VIC, Waterloo Road, London SE1 8NB  
SADLER'S WELLS, Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4TN  
(also at the PEACOCK THEATRE, Portugal Street,  
Kingsway, London WC2A 2HT)

## More on Liam Scarlett

This is in the nature of a 'follow-up' to the short piece in the May 2008 'Broadsheet' concerning Royal Ballet Artist Liam Scarlett, the first winner of the Association's DeValois Prize for young choreographers. In early May, Liam gave one of the Royal Ballet's Master Classes in the Linbury Theatre entitled "New Scarlett". He must have been the youngest person ever to have such a responsibility, but despite this, he gave with great clarity and charm, a demonstration of the choreography he was creating for the performances of New Works at the end of the month, also in the Linbury. Taking part in the rehearsal were Ricardo Cervera, Cindy Jourdain, Samantha Raine, Johannes Stepanek and pianist Robert Clark. When the piece, *Of Mozart*, appeared on the program of "New Works", it proved to be most substantial, and the highlight of the evening. The music was Mozart's Piano Concerto no. 23 in A, K488, played by Robert Clark and the Southbank Sinfonia. The 28 minute work was for eight dancers, the four at the Master Class being joined by Elizabeth Harrod, Laura Morera, Bennett Gartside and Paul Kay. The classical choreography was faithful to the music while providing the dancers with opportunities to display their talent and their individuality. The reviews in the heavier newspapers and the specialist magazines greeted the work very warmly. While some commended the policy of showing new material at the Linbury, others took the opportunity to bewail the limited innovation in the main Royal Ballet programming. So is Liam Scarlett now ready for a work for the main auditorium? Over to you, Dame Monica.

Richard Reavill

## Re-Emergence of the Bristol Old Vic

I have not written about the Bristol Old Vic recently, as the much sought after money for the refurbishment of this lovely theatre has been guaranteed, and work is commencing. Obviously at this stage it is far too early to have any idea when the theatre might re-open on a working basis, but I will keep you informed as well as I can.

Meantime, on Sunday June 29<sup>th</sup> a very special event will have taken place, all thanks to the

drive, initiative and enthusiasm of the Chairman of the BOV Theatre Club, when *Shakespeare and Stratford* took place at the Bristol Old Vic. The eminent ensemble of distinguished artists included Richard Pasco, Judi Dench, Jane Lapotaire, Barbara Leigh-Hunt, with Martin Best. First seen in Stratford last November, Ray had seen the show, and was determined, there and then, that somehow or other he would get it to the Bristol Old Vic, and his determination and hard work won the day, and this wonderful event took place, as planned, to a packed audience. It was presented by the Bristol Old Vic Theatre Club, in collaboration with the Bristol Old Vic, and Ray is going to let me know all the details of this very special evening, which I hope to be able to tell you about in the next Broadsheet. Ray richly deserves our congratulations on succeeding in bringing such a great event to the Theatre Royal, and thanks to the artistes for agreeing to perform. All the proceeds from this event go to the refurbishment fund.

Mary-Jane Burcher

## The Quite Peculiar and Irresistible Charm of Ellen Terry



Following sell-out performances last summer at Smallhythe Place, Kent, her last home, the **Bonnington Playwrights** are to revive the production in London next year. There will be a fundraising dinner at the Bonnington Café, Vauxhall, London, where the group meets. Vegetarian cooking, wine, entertainment, £35 per head, 7<sup>th</sup> October 2008, 6 pm.

Scilla Fernandez

[scilla@pezenasvacances.com](mailto:scilla@pezenasvacances.com)

or Richard White

[richardwhite@homecall.co.uk](mailto:richardwhite@homecall.co.uk)

020-7582 3985

## The House of Lilian Baylis

by Liz Schafer

Lilian Baylis lived in the same house, 27 Stockwell Park Road, for over twenty years and the house has a blue plaque on the outside to commemorate the fact. This very attractive house is convenient for the Old Vic although not quite so handy for Baylis's other theatre, Sadler's Wells. The house's current owner Suzy Arnold recently invited me to visit the house along with Ingrid Firminger, whose grandmother was Baylis's housekeeper: Ingrid told me her father (who was born in 1925) vividly remembered not only living at 27 Stockwell Park Road with his mother, Mrs Firminger, but also visiting Baylis's bolt hole, her hut at Box Hill.

Suzy is lucky enough to have a lot of documentation on the history of her home. The abstract of the title of the house indicates that the house was 'recently erected' in December 1836 and it was one of four freehold cottages built together in what was then quite a rural area. It was less rural by the time Lilian Baylis moved into the house in 1916 and life in the house was probably quite hectic at this time. The four bedroomed house would have been occupied by Baylis's aunt Ellen Cons - who was paying the rent at a yearly rate of £45 - Baylis herself; Baylis's parents Newton and Liebe Baylis, who with the outbreak of the First World War decided to return to live in England after living for over twenty years in South Africa; it is also likely that Baylis's sister, Ethel Dunning, and Ethel's children, Gladys and Robert, stayed frequently, if not all the time, as they were resident in London during the war. Later on in 1924 Baylis bought the house for the sum of £790, her aunt Ellen having died in 1920 leaving the bulk of her estate to Baylis. When Baylis's executors sold the four bedroomed house it was described in the sale particulars as a 'Double-fronted Residence' situated 'just off the main Clapham Road with the Tram and Omnibus route, and a convenient distance from Stockwell Station'. There is also a very extensive basement area which opens out into the garden and we speculated that that was where the housekeeper Mrs Firminger lived.

The Stockwell Park Road house has changed a

great deal since Baylis lived there and the Water Board, which purchased the house from Baylis's executors, did a lot of re-modelling, changing rooms into offices, and building bomb shelters etc. Suzy and her late husband spent most of their early years in the house living in what amounted to a building site as they renovated bit by bit and tried to get rid of the institutionalised atmosphere brought in by the Water Board. However, some features are clearly the same as in Baylis's day and the remains of Baylis's garden house, which she loved to camp out in, are still there. It was great fun to stand in that garden and think of the illustrious people who had passed through: Laurence Olivier, Peggy Ashcroft, Ralph Richardson, John Gielgud, Joan Cross, Lawrance Collingwood, Margot Fonteyn, Ninette de Valois, Constant Lambert, Robert Helpman - all of them would have been summoned at one time or another to Baylis's annual garden parties. And it seems appropriate that Suzy Arnold's three daughters are all working in performance or performance related areas: her eldest daughter Katherine, who was 18 months old when the Arnolds moved in to the house in 1984, is an aerialist and circus performer; her middle daughter Phoebe works for POP magazine; and her youngest daughter Lillian is a theatre designer.

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## Shakespeare's birthday party - revisited



Sir Peter Wright in conversation with James Ranger at the Shakespeare's Birthday Party at the Old Vic



## LATEST REVIEWS

### ***Pygmalion* at the Old Vic**

by **Mary-Jane Burcher**

I visited the Old Vic recently to see a performance of *Pygmalion*, and whilst there, I asked the Management if they intended doing a pantomime this coming Christmas, and was told that it was very unlikely, but they would be doing one for Christmas next year, 2009. This was good news, and bears out what Sir Ian McKellan told me that, due to his film commitments with two more *Lord of the Rings* films, he could not do a pantomime this year, but very much hoped he would be free to do one next year.

And now to *Pygmalion*. Sir Peter Hall's much praised production has done an extensive tour before opening at the Old Vic, where it is playing to excellent business. It is a beautifully acted production of the classic story of the Cockney flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, who, after becoming the protégé of well-known speech and dialect Professor Henry Higgins, subsequently emergence into high society. I have seen the play several times in the past, but in watching this revival, I realised what a wonderful job Lerner and Lowe had done in bringing Eliza's story to the musical stage, and I have to admit that at the close of the first scene in the precincts of the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, when Eliza is left alone on the stage, I fully expected her to burst into "Wouldn't it be luvly"! Michelle Dockery (right) was an outstanding Eliza, giving the part all the Cockney brashness and guttersnipe manners of the flower girl, and then emerging slowly into a independent lady who knows her own mind, but has acquired manners grace and charm along the way. In the end, she is able to put her former teacher, the insupportable Henry Higgins, in his place.

Tim Pigott-Smith gave a fine performance as Henry Higgins: a very long role, which this fine actor played rather like a little boy, who sulks when his doesn't get his own way, and turns to his mother for guidance! It is to Tim Pigott-Smith's great credit that, at the finale, one could well understand and sympathise with Eliza Doolittle's exit from his life. I have to say that I found Tony Haygarth's Doolittle rather

disappointing, as did my actress companion. Perhaps being used to the very much larger than life character one has seen on stage and screen, Mr. Haygarth's performance was very low key, and did not register as it should, and, as one critic remarked, he spoke his lines far too quickly. Barbara Jefford's vast experience spoke reams as Mrs. Higgins. The way she dealt with her irresponsible son, and the selfish way he treated Eliza, was beautifully played, and her gracious presence was a lesson in itself to younger actors. James Laurenson was an excellent side-kick to Higgins, again a nicely judged performance, careful not to overshadow the formidable Professor. His understanding of Eliza's anger at the end was beautifully played.



I was, however, disappointed in Una Stubbs' playing of the Housekeeper, Mrs. Pearce. I found her far too personal in her portrayal, and her see-through blouse was hardly suitable for a good and loyal head servant in those times. She had every right to be dubious of Eliza's entry into Professor Higgin's household at first, but her informal way of speaking her lines seemed strangely out of character. Overall, however, the play was a delight, and Sir Peter is to be congratulated on an outstanding production.

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### ***The Ballet Boyz. Greatest Hits!* at Sadler's Wells** by **Richard Reavill**

Michael Nunn and Billy Trevitt decided a few months ago to 'rebrand' their seven year old company, George Piper Dances, as 'The Ballet Boyz'. Perhaps a strange decision at this point, as elapsed time has brought the 'Boyz' even further from boyhood than when they

established their company. Even so, they are unlikely to have the Trade Descriptions Act evoked against them, as 'The Ballet Boyz' is the name by which the company has been known by most people since its formation.



The onward march of time has provoked another theme for their current programme, the concept of the retrospective (artist's version), or the 'Greatest Hits' (recording artist's version). Michael and Billy opted for the latter variant, and followed this theme consistently (the four items on the program are titled: Track 1; Track 2; etc) if not ultimately wisely. I have no quarrel with the dance content of this program. Well, only a small quarrel, as I would put *Critical Mass* up with *Broken Fall* as one of their best works. Of course, compiling 'best works' may not be compatible with creating a program which is both practical to dance and provides a balanced evening's entertainment.

No matter, Russell Maliphant's *Broken Fall* got the evening off to a cracking start, though not in the sense that any bones were broken in the swooping ascents and descents of the multiple partnering. Oxana Panchenko was excellent in the role originally created on Sylvie Guillem, and projected a more vulnerable persona than did Sylvie. Oxana, Michael and Billy were joined after an interval by Malgorzata Dzierzon, and guest star Edward Watson from the Royal Ballet, for Christopher Wheeldon's *Mesmerics*. This is a lovely example of modern classicism, if you will excuse the oxymoron, and was well danced by all concerned, particularly Watson.

After the second interval, the 'Greatest Hits' format was partially ditched to accommodate a work which, though not entirely new, could be described as a major refurbishment. Raphael Bonachela originally created *AmOx* for Oxana and Amy Hollingsworth, and this piece was reworked as *EdOx* for Oxana and Edward Watson, but with newly commissioned music. The conversion exercise, unlike some attempted by the building trade, was surprisingly successful, giving both dancers substantial roles

which focussed on their particular talents. The new role for Watson, presumably part of the deal to justify his moon-lighting from Covent Garden, exploited his flexibility and extensions.

Ending the evening on a humorous note is a very successful format, and on this occasion was brilliantly provided by Michael and Billy as competing tango dancers in *Yumba vs Nonino*, choreographed by Clive Revel Horwood. A fine way to end the performance, but the Boyz had a surprise for the audience. Stretching the recording artist concept way beyond its elastic limit, the entire cast reappeared as the BalletBoyz rock band, led by Michael on the drums. We all might have dreams of becoming rock-stars, dreams fuelled by the life-style and the earnings. Some basic talent might be required, though many would dispute this. Most would agree that dancing requires much more talent. My view is: "stick to the day job, Boyz!"

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***The Merry Widow*  
at the Coliseum**  
by **Mary-Jane Burcher**

*The Merry Widow* is probably the most famous of all operettas, and the music by the legendary Franz Lehar is amongst the most tuneful in the fantasy world of Viennese music. The song *Vilia* frequently stops the show, and somebody said to me only recently that when you first hear the strains of *The Merry Widow Waltz* being slowly played, and the two lovers start to dance round the stage, the hairs on the back of your neck stand on end with the sheer magic of the music.

For this production, English National Opera had persuaded the distinguished opera director John Copley to return to direct the piece, with famous opera singers Amanda Roocroft, John Graham-Hall and Alfie Boe heading the cast. What a change indeed from grand opera to the fun and games of the Viennese court and glittering society, including the famous can-can dancers at Maxim's!

*The Merry Widow* has quite a history. First produced at Daly's Theatre in 1907 with the great musical star of the era, Lily Elsie, playing the leading role, it caused a sensation. No other operetta conjures up Edwardian London or late imperial Vienna with the same glitter and melody. The picture of The Widow making her first entrance down a staircase, wearing a big

black picture hat, is one that is part of musical theatre history. The last production I saw was an excellent touring one by the Carl Rosa Company, and before that, the famous Australian operatic soprano June Bronhill played it, at the Coliseum. June, who I knew well, was just right for the part: she was the right age, she had a beautiful voice and had the right chemistry and sexual allure to portray a lady who had loved and been loved many times, and who, eventually, returned to her first and lasting love. Very romantic! Evelyn Laye, for whom I worked for many years, told me she had played it quite early in her long career. She said she felt that she had been too young (she was only in her late twenties at the time) and *The Widow* is supposed to be a sophisticated older lady who has lived life to the full. Franz Lehar had told Evelyn, "You are my youngest Widow, but you are also the most beautiful". She never forgot that.

This latest production, translated by Jeremy Sams, contained a few innovations, most of which were quite unnecessary and rather irritating. The only new idea which really worked was to give comedian Roy Hudd, who is primarily known as a music hall and pantomime artist, a comedy number from the original 1907 production (but not heard in subsequent productions) in the Maxim's scene in Act III. Roy was a show-stopper in every performance.

The ENO had spent a lot of money on the production, especially on the lavish costumes and décor, and the enormous ensemble. I had never seen so many Can-Can dancers before, and at the Finale, the stage was literally crowded in the finale line-up! But it all made for a lovely evening; how could any performance of *The Merry Widow* fail to enchant? Unfortunately, however, ENO had made one rather glaring mistake, which was commented on by most of the critics it. Both Amanda Roocroft and John Graham-Hall, as the two romantic leads, were sadly miscast. To go from high dramatic operatic roles to the lightness of Viennese operetta isn't easy. Miss Roocroft as *The Widow* lacked the necessary personality, sophistication and sexual allure. Naturally, her singing was glorious, but she was badly served on her first entrance, which is supposed to set the seal on the evening, by being given a gown with a hideous gold motif on it, and an unsightly wig. There was no traditional hat, quite unlike the real "widow". Certainly her costumes in Acts II and III were an

improvement, but it is that first entrance which makes the impact that is supposed to last through all that follows. The same applies to Danilo, who is supposed to be a bit of a charming rogue, who falls in love with *The Widow* all over again. Again, John Graham-Hall sang beautifully, but his costumes were all wrong, particularly in Act II when he makes his first entrance in an enormous uniform. The poor man danced awkwardly (no wonder) and neither artist seemed at ease in their roles. However, Alfie Boe played the second romantic male lead, Camille, and not only sang magnificently but played his role as if he really meant it; Fiona Murphy, the 'dutiful wife' of the Baron, not only looked beautiful but acted the part with romantic grace and charm. However, it was wise of ENO to book Richard Stuart, the famous Gilbert and Sullivan artist, to play Baron Zeta, a delightful artist and comic. As always with this show, the all male sextet *Women, Women* had several richly deserved ovations.

What can I say about Roy Hudd? His role was Clerk at the Embassy, but as he is one of my very oldest friends, I naturally looked out anxiously for him when the curtain went up on the first Act: "The Embassy", with its enormous central staircase, and most of the enormous company in their places to commence the proceedings. I spotted him at the very top of the staircase, with a lovely grin on his face as if he was enjoying every minute. In his long career, this was a new experience, and that grin never left his face during the whole evening. He came into his own with his big number in Act III, the audience giving him a big ovation when he took his final call in the Finale. For Roy this was a dream come true. Actually, I think he enjoyed playing on the vast stage of the Coliseum, with such a huge company, just as much as he enjoyed playing in *The Merry Widow*. He told me afterwards it was the highlight of his career, and, as he had to share a dressing room with Alfie Boe and Richard Stuart, both these gentlemen told me how much they loved having him with them, and how he made them laugh.

Despite a few misgivings, it was a lovely evening, and if this production is ever revived, which I am given to understand it may well be, I hope that ENO will cast the leading roles a little more carefully. Otherwise it was well nigh perfect.

## NEWS from Sadler's Wells

### Heat Wave Dance Weekend – 2 & 3 August



Sadler's Wells will be opening its doors to its local community for a weekend jam packed full of taster dance classes. From Bollywood to break dance, ballet to ballroom, street dance to samba, why not try something new and find out about a wealth of dance opportunities on your doorstep?

Time	Venue	Saturday 2 August	Sunday 3 August
11am – 12 noon	Studio 1 Studio 2	Flamenco Street Dance	Tai Chi Street Dance
12.15pm – 1.15pm	Studio 1 Studio 2	Beginners Ballet Street Dance	Flamenco Contemporary
1.30pm – 2.30pm	Studio 1 Studio 2	Tango Contemporary	Beginners Ballet African Dance
2.30pm – 3pm	<b>BREAK</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	<b>BREAK</b>
3pm – 4pm	Studio 1 Studio 2	Basic Break Dance Beginners Ballroom	Ballet – Improvers Tango
4.15pm – 5.15pm	Studio 1 Studio 2	Salsa Bollywood	Beginners Ballroom Brazilian Samba

These workshops are in partnership with London borough of Islington as part of Heat Wave. Each workshop costs £2 and is open to anyone over 16. No dance experience necessary! To book please call the ticket office on 0844 412 4300.

## NEWS from The Old Vic

*The Norman Conquests* runs from 11 September to 20 December.

The Old Vic brings **Alan Ayckbourn's** comic masterpiece, *The Norman Conquests* to the London stage for the first time in 34 years. **Matthew Warchus** (*Speed-the-Plow, God of Carnage, The Lord of the Rings*) directs an outstanding ensemble cast: **Amelia Bullmore, Jessica Hynes, Stephen Mangan, Ben Miles, Paul Ritter** and **Amanda Root**. *The Norman Conquests* follows the tumultuous relationships of an extended family over the course of one weekend. Throughout the house, the somewhat hapless Norman attempts to seduce his wife, her sister and her sister-in-law in the comically misguided belief that his destiny in life is to make all women happy.

Especially for this production, The Old Vic auditorium will be converted into The CQS Space, an intimate theatre in-the-round. The plays were originally written to be performed in this way for their premiere at the Library Theatre, Scarborough. Throughout August, we will be altering the seating in The Old Vic to



allow these wonderfully British plays to be seen to their best advantage. West End audiences have never yet seen Ayckbourn's work in this fashion, so book early to experience this exciting new perspective on both the plays and The Old Vic.

The plays are not a standard trilogy and can be seen individually or together in any order. You can choose to start and end with any of the three plays and each different way of viewing will give you an alternative angle on the characters and the comedy. We are running a number of special ticket offers for this production. Buy a top price ticket to all of Norman's conquests for £100 or buy a top price ticket to two of Norman's conquests for £80\*. During the course of the run there are five Saturdays where we will perform all three plays. You can book for these special Trilogy Days and also take advantage of the £100 ticket offer\*.

*\*Subject to availability, limited availability and at the management's discretion. Tickets normally priced £42.50 (preview) or £45.*

TICKETS: 0870 060 6628  
[www.oldvictheatre.com](http://www.oldvictheatre.com)  
The Old Vic, The Cut, London SE1

## WHAT'S ON at Sadler's Wells and the Old Vic

### Sadler's Wells

0870 737 7737  
[www.sadlerswells.com](http://www.sadlerswells.com)

22 Jul-31 Aug: West Side Story  
2-14 Sept: Matthew Bourne's Dorian Gray  
19-20 Sept: Emanuel Gat Dance  
24-27 Sept: Morphoses/The Wheeldon Company  
29-30 Sept: Anna Teresa de Keersmaeker Rosas

### Peacock Theatre

0870 737 0337

5-12 Sept: British Youth Opera  
16 Sept-4 Oct: Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo

### Old Vic Theatre

0870 060 6628  
[www.oldvictheatre.com](http://www.oldvictheatre.com)

Until 9 Aug: Pygmalion  
11 Sep - 20 Dec: The Norman Conquests

## Rehearsals

We have had the pleasure of attending several rehearsals this year at Sadler's Wells including a fascinating opportunity to see Michael Clark rehearse Rambert Dance Company members in a new work and then to see him rehearse his own company. We are sorry to say that there are no further rehearsals on the cards at the moment. If your e-mail address is registered with the Hon. Secretary (see below) you can be informed quickly of news of any further rehearsals which may be offered.

## WHO'S WHO in the Vic-Wells Association

### Chairman:

Mr. James Ranger  
Cromer Cottage  
Cromer, Stevenage  
Herts SG2 7AQ  
0143 886 1318  
[jim\\_ranger@hotmail.com](mailto:jim_ranger@hotmail.com)

### Hon. Secretary:

Dr. Richard Reavill  
7 Nuns Acre  
Goring, Reading  
Berkshire RG8 9BE  
0149 187 2574  
[nunsacre@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:nunsacre@tiscali.co.uk)

### Hon. Treasurer:

Mr. Neville C Taylor  
Flat 1  
128 Gloucester Terrace  
London W2 6HP  
0207 262 5898  
[neville.taylor@homecall.co.uk](mailto:neville.taylor@homecall.co.uk)

### Hon. Social Secretary:

Kate Smith  
291A Alexandra Park Road  
London N22 7BP  
[trendydiva1@aol.com](mailto:trendydiva1@aol.com)

### Hon. Registrar:

Professor Liz Schafer  
372 Stroude Road  
Virginia Water  
Surrey GU25 4DB  
0134 484 2836  
[e.schafer@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:e.schafer@rhul.ac.uk)

### Hon. Editor:

Miss Imogen Walker  
Please e-mail all enquiries to:  
[jen.walker@westherts.ac.uk](mailto:jen.walker@westherts.ac.uk)

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