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*Peeverel*



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# *Flora's Peverel*

**A community play marking the 50th anniversary  
of Flora Thompson's death, 21st May 1947**

*written by* Jo Smith

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*Flora Thompson, the author of "Lark Rise to Candleford,"  
lived in Liphook from 1916 to 1928. This play brings to life  
the period when, against the odds, she won the fight to write*

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Except for the first and last two scenes, the action of the play takes place in various locations in and around Liphook between the years 1916 and 1928.

*The performance is continuous, with one interval of 15 minutes*



## Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to a great number of people whose kindness and help enabled me to research the East Hampshire period of Flora's life in time for the 50th anniversary of her death this year. I hope I have not over-stepped my dramatic licence too much in translating their memories and information into a live stage performance.

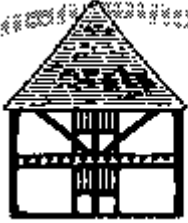
*John Owen ("Jo") Smith, Author/Producer*

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## FLORA THOMPSON

Flora Jane Thompson was born (néé Timms) in 1876 at Juniper Hill on the Oxfordshire/Northamptonshire border. She started work in a neighbouring post office at the age of fourteen, thus beginning a long connection with the Post Office. At the age of twenty-one, she took a position as sub-office assistant to the postmaster in Grayshott, Hampshire, and was to stay in Hampshire, more or less, for the next thirty years of her life. On leaving Grayshott she moved to Bournemouth and in January 1903 married John Thompson. Their daughter Winifred (called Diana) was born in October of that year, and their first son Basil in 1909. In 1916, a month after Flora's favourite brother Edwin was killed in action in Belgium, John Thompson applied for the position of postmaster at Liphook.

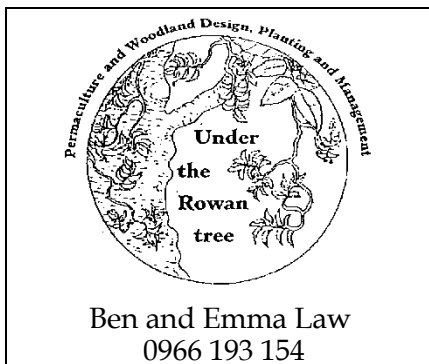
The family thus moved back to within three miles of Grayshott, and Flora was able to renew her acquaintance with the area. Easier times followed the end of the First World War and, despite the arrival of a third child, Peter, in 1918, Flora began writing more industriously during this period than at any other time. Here she wrote her nature notes, *The Peverel Papers*, from her own observations during her long and frequent walks in the area, and here in 1926 the family bought a house of their own for the first time, having previously been forced to live in rented Post Office accommodation. But hardly had they settled in than John Thompson applied for promotion again, and moved to Dartmouth in November 1927. Flora stayed in her beloved Liphook for nearly a year more while the house was sold, and then followed, never to return to Hampshire.

During the next ten years she revised some of the notes she had written previously about her early childhood and developed them into the book *Lark Rise* which was to bring her fame late in life. The success of this book led to the publication of two more, and their eventual appearance as the trilogy *Lark Rise to Candleford*. She wrote a fourth book, *Heatherley*, a sequel following on from *Candleford Green* and telling of her time in Grayshott, but she chose not to publish it. Instead, she wrote *Still Glides the Stream*, which was to be her final publication.

Flora Thompson died at Brixham, in Devon, on 21st May 1947.

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The Phoenix at Barbados House, Bordon  
Sesame Health Store, 26 The Square, Liphook  
Bramshott & Liphook Parish Council Office  
Bohunt Community School, Liphook



## CAST NOTES

**Richard Allen** [*teenage 'Joe' Leggett / Canadian soldier*] is a pupil at All Hallows School, Farnham, and belongs to the Phoenix Young Theatre at Bordon where he has acted in several smaller plays.

**Philip Carr** [*young 'Joe' Leggett*] is nine years old and attends Mayfield Junior School in Farnborough. This is his first play although he has done sketches at school.

**Janet Cockerill** [*Mrs Parkhurst*] since returning to her favourite hobby after retiring from the family shoe business, has had a variety of parts with the Highbury Players and Townswomen's Guild. She is a member of Haslemere Thespians, and also very much enjoyed appearing in 'A Balance of Trust'.

**Jeremy Cogman** [*Sgt Mumford*] has recently appeared as the unsavoury *Geoffrey* in 'The Lion in Winter' for Bunbury Theatre Co, and as the *Genie* in 'Aladdin' for O.D.S. in Fleet. He hopes that his directorial debut, probably with Bunbury, may be imminent.

**Helen Coyte** [*Bessie Vale*] has played with LAMPS in a number of productions, including most recently 'The Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe.'

**Mary Coyte** [*Gypsy*] needs little introduction to amateur theatre-goers in the area, having played for several local societies over a number of years, including the part of *Miss Hannigan* in last year's LAMPS production of 'Annie.'

**Simon Coyte** [*Harry Envois*] is seen playing his real-life role as a postman. He is the present chairman of Liphook Amateur Productions (LAMPS), and appeared as *Sir Frederick Pollock* in 'A Balance of Trust.'

**Alexander Grant** [*young Peter Thompson*] has previously played in 'Robin Hood'. His hobbies include football, roller-blading and horse riding.

**Tony Grant** [*Bill Tidy*] has appeared in many roles in local drama, and has also taken lead role in the film 'Friday Knight'. He was in the B.B.C. 'Christmas Day in the Morning' and played *Peter* in the Wintershall Passion this Easter. He also played *Jonathan Hutchinson* in 'A Balance of Trust', but is perhaps best known for his roles as a pantomime 'baddie'.

**Scott Hopkins** [*teenage Peter Thompson / Canadian soldier*] has previously played with LAMPS in 'The Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe'.

**Nikki Jewell** [*Eileen Leggett*] has appeared in several Headley Theatre Club productions, including the Youth Group performance of 'Gone up in Smoke' and three pantomimes. She also admits to being an avid supporter of Manchester United FC!

**John McGregor** [*Capt Byfield / Postman at Bournemouth*] has played a number of roles for Headley Theatre Club, including *Squire Aldworthy* in 'Tom Jones' and the *Duke of York* in 'Humpty Dumpty.' He took two parts in 'A Balance of Trust' and keeps up his batting average in this play.

**Kay McGregor** [*Mrs Leggett*] is also a member of Headley Theatre Club for which she has been involved in most productions, both on and off the stage, since 1991. She played *Jane Hutchinson* in 'A Balance of Trust.'

*Cast Notes continue . . . /*

## CAST - in order of appearance

Flora Thompson .....	Barbara Netherwood
Postman at Bournemouth .....	John McGregor
'Louie' Woods .....	Mel White
Sgt John Mumford .....	Jeremy Cogman
John Thompson .....	Rod Sharp
'Joe' Leggett (at 8 years old) .....	Philip Carr
Bill Tidy .....	Tony Grant
Maggie Tidy .....	Dawn Wolverson
Harry Envis .....	Simon Coyte
Dr Ronald Campbell Macfie .....	Patrick Pakenham-Keady
Bessie Vale .....	Helen Coyte
Mrs Vale .....	Jean Vivian
British Corporal .....	Nick Webb
Canadian Soldiers .....	Richard Allen & Scott Hopkins
Gypsy woman .....	Mary Coyte
Mrs Parkhurst .....	Janet Cockerill
Elsie Parkhurst .....	Theresa Sharland
Diana Thompson .....	Pam Ridgwell
'Joe' Leggett (at 18 years) .....	Richard Allen
Capt. Byfield .....	John McGregor
Sam, the shepherd .....	Stan Sharp
Mrs Leggett .....	Kay McGregor
Eileen Leggett .....	Nikki Jewell
Peter Thompson (at 8 years) .....	Alexander Grant
Chairman of cable company .....	Stan Sharp
Peter Thompson (at 18 years) .....	Scott Hopkins



## Production Team

Author/Producer .....	Jo Smith
Artistic Director .....	Derek Watts
Stage manager .....	Nick Webb
Assisted by .....	Dil & Debbi Williamson, Adam Coyte and cast members
Lighting/Sound .....	Steve White, Paul Kosinski, Simon Lucas, Simon Tanner
Wardrobe/Properties .....	Eve Phillips, Dil Williamson & helpers
Research/Publicity/Programme .....	Jo Smith
Front of House .....	Ruth Bower, Carol Hawkins & helpers
Cast Photographs .....	Angus McKay

and thanks to all those others who have helped with this production in any way.

# SCENES OF THE PLAY

## Act 1 - 1916-18

Prelude: Flanders, April 1916

Scene 1: Flora's garden in Bournemouth, April 1916

Scene 2: Canadian army camp, near Liphook, September 1916

Scene 3: Liphook Post Office, later that morning

Scene 4: Lynchmere Common

Scene 5: Flora's room, Liphook Post Office

Scene 6: On the road from Forest Mere

Scene 7: The Postmaster's house, soon after

Scene 8: On the Road with Maggie Tidy

Scene 9: Liphook Post Office, summer 1917

Scene 10: On Bramshott Common, later that day

Scene 11: Liphook Post Office, soon after

Scene 12: On the Road with Bill & Maggie Tidy

Scene 13: Flora's room, Liphook Post Office, early 1918

Scene 14: A street in Liphook, at the same time

Scene 15: Flora's room, Liphook Post Office, at the same time

Scene 16: Split scene - Flora and Louie

## INTERVAL

## Act 2 - 1926-28

Scene 17: An open space near Liphook, summer 1926

Scene 18: Liphook Post Office, a few days later

Scene 19: In the garden of the Postmaster's house, a few weeks later

Scene 20: Liphook Post Office, at the same time

Scene 21: On Weavers Down soon after

Scene 22: The Leggett's farm, Griggs Green, a few weeks later

Scene 23: 'Woolmer Gate', Griggs Green, soon after

Scene 24: Liphook Post Office, early morning a few weeks later

Scene 25: Weavers Down, early spring 1927

Scene 26: The Telephone Exchange, Liphook Post Office

Scene 27: 'Woolmer Gate', Griggs Green, soon after

Scene 28: Lynchmere Common

Scene 29: The Leggett's farm, Griggs Green, a few weeks later

Scene 30: Hewshott House, Liphook, summer 1927

Scene 31: 'Woolmer Gate', Griggs Green, some time later

Scene 32: 'Woolmer Gate', Griggs Green, autumn 1928

Scene 33: Dartmouth, Devon, April 1937

Scene 34: Brixham, Devon, May 1947



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## CAST NOTES (continued)

**Barbara Netherwood** [*Flora*] has worked professionally as well as performing with and directing amateur companies. Her first job in the theatre was literally to sweep the stage, doing stage management and understudying before being allowed to properly 'tread the boards'. Among the diverse range of roles she has played over the years are *Jane Eyre*, *Rosalind* in 'As You Like It', *Cecily* in 'The Importance of Being Earnest', and *Maggie* in 'Hobson's Choice'.

**Patrick Pakenham-Keady** [*Dr Ronald Macfie*] describes himself as 'a rank amateur who enjoys making a fool of himself on and off stage.' He played *Canon Rawnsley* in 'A Balance of Trust'.

**Pam Ridgwell** [*Diana*] has lived in Liphook all her life, and has taken part in a number of productions for Bunbury Theatre Co, Alton College and Rolle College. She is a teacher at Stoughton Grange juniors in Guildford.

**Theresa Sharland** [*Elsie Parkhurst*] appeared in 'A Balance of Trust'. She enjoys singing and is a member of LAMPS where she has appeared in 'Annie', 'The Lion the Witch & the Wardrobe', & 'A Dragon for Dinner'. In her spare time she is an active Guide.

**Rod Sharp** [*John Thompson*] is a long-serving member of Headley Theatre Club, for which he has played many parts over the years in roles as diverse as the mysterious *Inspector* in 'An Inspector Calls' and the *Giant* in a production of 'Jack and the Beanstalk.'

**Stan Sharp** [*Sam the Shepherd / Chairman*] has been active in many different kinds of amateur entertainment and in a variety of places over the years. His Hampshire origin contributes to this community play.

**Jo Smith** [*Author / Producer*] is a local historian, author, and member of Headley Theatre Club. This is the third of his historical community plays to be produced locally, the others being 'This Bloody Crew' and 'A Balance of Trust.'

**Jean Vivian** [*Mrs Vale*] is a member of Bunbury Theatre Company and the Phoenix Writers Circle. She also appeared in 'A Balance of Trust'.

**Derek Watts** [*Artistic Director*] is a member of Bunbury Theatre Co and runs the weekly Monday evening arts magazine *Cornucopia* on Wey Valley radio. He was Artistic Director of 'A Balance of Trust' and, despite his better judgement, was persuaded to do the job again with this play!

**Nick Webb** [*Corporal / Stage Manager*] is another long-serving member of Headley Theatre Club, and its current chairman. He has played many and varied roles both on and off the stage, and was also Stage Manager for 'A Balance of Trust.'

**Mel White** [*'Louie' Woods*] has been a member of Headley Theatre Club for twelve years where she has played various roles, both front and back stage. She particularly enjoys singing in folk clubs and musical shows. Previous roles have included the title role in 'Sinbad the Sailor,' and the young *Flora Thompson* in 'A Balance of Trust'.

**Dawn Wolverson** [*Maggie Tidy*] is a local teacher who has played a number of contrasting roles with Headley Theatre Club, from pantomime villain through dowager duchess to trollop. She is an active member of the Farnborough Mummies Group (as seen on TV!) and sings and acts at a number of folk clubs and festivals throughout the south of England.

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## Historical Calendar of Events

- 1916 Apr: Flora's brother Edwin killed in action in Belgium  
May 30: Vacancy for postmaster at Liphook advertised  
Aug: Thompson family moves from Bournemouth to Liphook
- 1918 Oct 19: Peter Redmond Thompson born in Liphook  
Nov 11: Armistice - end of First World War
- 1919 Flora takes a correspondence course in the *Daily News*
- 1920 Flora wrote six stories for *The Catholic Fireside*
- 1921 Flora writes 'Out of Doors' nature articles (set in the New Forest)  
for *The Catholic Fireside*  
Book of Flora's poems published: *Bog Myrtle & Peat* - her first publicity  
- pictured at her typewriter in newspapers  
Country bus services start in Liphook
- 1922 Flora begins writing her 'Peverel Papers' nature notes (set mainly around  
Liphook) for *The Catholic Fireside*  
Sept: Basil Thompson starts at Churchers College (age 12)
- 1923 Peter Thompson starts school (age 5)
- 1923-5 Flora writes a 'Fireside Reading Circle' article and a 'Peverel Paper' each  
month, plus setting and judging her competitions and dealing with  
volumes of correspondence
- 1925 Flora helps to write the *Guide to Liphook*  
Ends the 'Fireside Reading Circle' and starts a postal writers group  
'The Peverel Society' with Mildred Humble-Smith
- 1926 Feb: Basil Thompson and Cecil Cluer (engaged to Diana) go out to  
Queensland, Australia  
Thompsons buy *Woolmer Gate* at Griggs Green
- 1927 July 6: Vacancy for postmaster at Dartmouth advertised  
Aug 3: Appointment of John Thompson to Dartmouth recorded  
Sep 9: *Woolmer Gate* put on the market  
Nov: John Thompson moves to Dartmouth - Flora, Diana & Peter stay  
behind in Griggs Green
- 1928 Autumn: Thompsons move from Griggs Green
- 
- 1935 John Thompson retires
- 1936 Mar 30: "Richard Brownlow" retires (?)  
Flora (aged 60) sends short story 'The Tail-less Fox' to *The Lady* magazine  
- published in December
- 1937 Apr: 'Old Queenie' published in *The Lady*  
Aug: 'An Oxfordshire Hamlet in the Eighties' published in *The National  
Review* - became the start of 'Lark Rise'  
Aug: Basil Thompson marries Dora in America

- 1938 May: 'May Day in the Eighties' published in *The National Review*  
 'Lark Rise' accepted by the Oxford University Press
- 1939 Mar: 'Lark Rise' published  
 Flora starts writing 'Over to Candleford'
- 1940 Thompsons move from Dartmouth to Brixham
- 1941 Feb: Proofs of 'Over to Candleford' ready  
 Sept: Peter Thompson lost at sea, aged 22  
 'Peveler Society' disbanded
- 1942 Flora writes 'Candleford Green'
- 1943 Jan: 'Candleford Green' published
- 1944 Flora writes 'Heatherley'
- 1945 Apr: Trilogy of 'Lark Rise to Candleford' published  
 Flora starts writing 'Still Glides the Stream'
- 1946 Aug: 'Still Glides the Stream' completed
- 1947 May 21: Flora dies in bed in the evening, aged 70
- 1948 Jul 13: John Thompson dies, aged 74  
 'Still Glides the Stream' published - Diana literary executor
- 1966 Diana dies, aged 63  
 Flora's papers sent to the University of Texas
- 1970 Anne Mallinson discovers the East Hampshire connection
- 1976 Centenary of Flora's birth - literary lunch in the 'Anchor' at Liphook
- 1978 Plaque put on house next to old post office in Liphook
- 1979 'A Country Calendar', an extended biographical essay by Margaret Lane,  
 published including 'Heatherley' and selections from 'The Peveler Papers'
- 1981 Sculptured bust of Flora by Philip Jackson erected outside sorting office in  
 Liphook (subsequently moved into the Library in 1995)
- 1997 50th anniversary of Flora's death



**'On the Trail of Flora Thompson'** will be available later in 1997.

Written by the author of 'Flora's Peveler,' this illustrated book looks in more detail at the life of Flora Thompson in East Hampshire, and the people and places she came to know during her time in the district. If you would like to be contacted nearer the publication date, please leave your details on the list at front of house. Pre-publication discounts will apply. Alternatively, contact the author at 12 Hillside Close, Headley Down, Hampshire GU35 8BL - Tel/Fax: (01428) 712892.

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