

*Flora's
Heatherley*



12 - 21 May, 2006

FLORA THOMPSON, 1876–1947

Flora Jane Thompson was born (née 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. After leaving Grayshott she married John Thompson in January 1903 and they moved to Bournemouth. 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.

'Heatherley' — Flora Thompson's own sequel to *Lark Rise to Candleford* in which she describes her time in Grayshott — is published by John Owen Smith, 19 Kay Crescent, Headley Down, Hampshire GU35 8AH
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For further information on Flora Thompson, visit the web-site at
www.johnowensmith.co.uk/flora/

In May 2007 we plan to perform *Flora's Peverel*, a sequel which covers the period of Flora Thompson's life in Liphook, 1916–1928

Flora's Heatherley

**A community play celebrating Flora Thompson's
time in Grayshott, Hampshire, 1898-1901**

written and directed by John Owen Smith

*Flora Thompson, the author of "Lark Rise to Candleford,"
was assistant postmistress in Grayshott. This play brings to life the
period when she says that she passed through her 'Sinister Street' days*

The action of the play takes place in various locations
in and around Grayshott, in the years 1899 and 1901.

The performance is continuous, with one interval of 15 minutes

Tour 2006

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Liphook Millennium Hall | <i>Friday 12th May – 8pm</i> |
| Haslemere Museum | <i>Saturday 13th May – 2.30 & 7.30pm</i> |
| Thursley Village Hall | <i>Friday 19th May – 8pm</i> |
| Headley Village Hall | <i>Saturday 20th May – 2.30 & 8pm</i> |
| Rural Life Centre, Tilford | <i>Sunday 21st May – 2.30pm</i> |

CAST – in order of appearance

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Walter Chapman, postmaster at Grayshott | Nick Webb |
| Emily Chapman, his wife | Pru Harrold |
| Flora Thompson (née Timms) | Karina Farnlucher |
| Annie Symonds | Georgia Keen |
| Mr Foreshaw | Stan Sharp |
| Sir Frederick Pollock | John McGregor |
| George Bernard Shaw | Rod Sharp |
| Marion | Jenna Cross |
| Bob Pikesley | Simon Coyte |
| Isobel | Sammi Gedsyk |
| Winifred Storr | Isobel Glinn |
| ‘Gee’ Leuchars | Emily Downs |
| Arthur Conan Doyle | Peter Glinn |
| William Austen Sillick, reporter for the <i>Herald</i> | David Green |
| Charles Hannant, a telegram boy | Brad Nicholls |
| Ernest Chapman, brother of Walter | Mike Measures |
| Mrs Davidson, wife of the Bishop of Winchester | Lesley Mather |
| Man in Pub | Jo Smith |
| Richard Brownlow | Paul Kosinski |
| Mrs Parkhurst | Mary Coyte |
| Mavis Brownlow, sister of Richard | Ashleigh Keech |

Grayshott Brass Band: Flora writes in ‘Heatherley’ that, during the Boer War:

“Every victory, even the smallest, was celebrated at home ...
and the village brass band was called out to play patriotic airs.”

Sadly there is no longer a Grayshott Band in existence.

Production Team

| | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Author/Director | John Owen Smith |
| Stage manager/Scenery construction | Paul Heath |
| Wardrobe | Dil Williamson & helpers |
| Properties | Kay McGregor & helpers |
| Publicity distribution | Pru Harrold |
| Front of House | Members of Headley Theatre Club |

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

SCENES OF THE PLAY

Act 1 – 1899

- Scene 1: Inside the Chapman's accommodation at Grayshott Post Office
- Scene 2: In Grayshott Post Office, next morning
- Scene 3: At the site of the proposed Refreshment House, Grayshott
- Scene 4: In Grayshott Post Office, some weeks later
- Scene 5: On Ludshott Common, later that day
- Scene 6: A Sunday afternoon in Crossways Road, Grayshott
- Scene 7: In Grayshott Post Office, a few days later
- Scene 8: Inside the Chapman's accommodation at Grayshott Post Office, that night
- Scene 9: In Grayshott Post Office, a few days later
- Scene 10: In Crossways Road, Grayshott, soon after
- Scene 11: In Mr Foreshaw's House, next Sunday afternoon
- Scene 12: In Crossways Road, Grayshott, a Sunday afternoon some weeks later
- Scene 13: The opening of the Fox & Pelican, Grayshott
- Scene 14: In Grayshott Post Office, a few days later

– INTERVAL –

Act 2 – 1901

- Scene 15: In Grayshott Post Office
- Scene 16: In the Chapman's accommodation at Grayshott Post Office
- Scene 17: At Flora's lodgings with Mrs Parkhurst
- Scene 18: Sir Frederick Pollock meets with Conan Doyle
- Scene 19: In Grayshott Post Office soon after
- Scene 20: On Ludshott Common soon after
- Scene 21: In Crossways Road, Grayshott
- Scene 22: Mrs Parkhurst's house, some weeks later
- Scene 23: In Grayshott Post Office, some time later
- Scene 24: In Crossways Road, immediately after
- Scene 25: In Grayshott Post Office, at the same time
- Scene 26: In Crossways Road, Grayshott, some time later
- Scene 27: By the new Hindhead Telegraph Office
- Scene 28: Mrs Parkhurst's house, some days later
- Scene 29: In Grayshott Post Office, a few days later
- Scene 30: Farewells in Grayshott
- Scene 31: Inside the Chapman's accommodation at Grayshott Post Office
- Scene 32: Epilogue and Flora's Wedding

NOTES ON CHARACTERS

Walter Chapman, postmaster at Grayshott 1892–1901: Born at Barley in Hertfordshire, and called 'Mr Hertford' by Flora in 'Heatherley'.

Emily Chapman, his wife: Murdered by her husband after Flora left his employment; buried in the churchyard at All Saints, Headley.

Flora Thompson (née Timms): Grayshott was her first permanent job after leaving her native Oxfordshire. We are not entirely sure when she left Grayshott – it would be between the time the Hindhead Telegraph office opened in Sept 1900 and the date of the census return of 31st March 1901 at which time she was working in Yateley.

Annie Symonds: Called 'Alma Stedman' in 'Heatherley'; she eventually married Walter's nephew and ran the post office in neighbouring Beacon Hill for many years.

Mr Foreshaw: There are few positive clues as to who 'Mr Foreshaw' might have been. However, Flora does indicate that he was buried locally, and only one man in the surrounding parishes' burial records seems to come close to fitting his description. This is John Volckman, who died on 10th August 1900, aged 63, and was buried in the churchyard at All Saints, Headley.

Sir Frederick Pollock : Called to the bar in 1871, moved to Hindhead in 1884 building *Hindhead Court* (now part of the Royal School). Instrumental in opening and naming the *Fox & Pelican* in Grayshott as a 'Refreshment House' in 1899. Shortly before his death in 1937, he advised on the form of Edward VIII's Abdication Act.

George Bernard Shaw: First contact with Hindhead was in 1898, while on honeymoon. He stayed at *Pitfold*, and later in the year rented *Blencathra* (now St Edmund's School) where he lived until leaving the district in 1900.

Bob Pikesley: We think that 'Bob Pikesley' may have been Albert Alderton, a smallholder who lived with his wife in Whitmore Vale.

Marion: Based on an individual character mentioned by Flora in 'Heatherley'.

Isobel: Character based on those of a number of typical Grayshott girls mentioned by Flora in 'Heatherley'.

Winifred Storr: The daughter of Rayner Storr, she lived at *Highcombe Edge* in Hindhead and left a diary for the years 1898/99 in which she mentions visits to Grayshott; she eventually married Gerald Brooke (of Brooke Bond tea).

Grace 'Gee' Leuchars: The daughter of Edgar Leuchars, an architect who built *Apley House* for himself opposite St Luke's Church, Grayshott.

Arthur Conan Doyle: Came to live in Hindhead in 1897 for his wife's health, and had *Undershaw* built. Here he 'revived' Sherlock Holmes, and also became involved in local sporting activities. Described as 'a man with a hand that grips you heartily and, in its sincerity of welcome, hurts.' He served as a physician in the 2nd Boer War, and his pamphlet justifying Britain's action earned him a knighthood in 1902.

William Sillick, reporter for the *Herald*: Flora does not tell us the reporter's name, but he was almost certainly William Sillick who was the sole local representative for the *Haslemere Herald* during the time that she was in Grayshott.

Ernest Chapman, brother of Walter: The founder of Chapman, Puttick & Lowry, builders & decorators in the Grayshott area for many years.

Mrs Davidson, wife of the Bishop of Winchester: The Church of England was in favour of the establishment of 'Refreshment Houses' in place of Public Houses.

Richard Brownlow: It is likely that the real 'Richard Brownlow,' was William Elwes who worked for *Cable & Wireless*.

Mavis Brownlow, sister of Richard: William Elwes had a real-life sister called Lilian, and our information on the family comes from her descendants.

Mrs Parkhurst: We can be reasonably sure that the 'Parkhursts' were the Levett family who lived in one half of *The Ferns* in The Avenue, Grayshott. According to the 1901 census Loftus Albert Levett, general labourer, lived here with his wife Alice.

Charles Hannant: In Grayshott School records for June 1899 it says "Charles Hannant aged 10 has been absent 3 times this week, carrying telegrams for the post office."

EDITED CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- 1859 London to Portsmouth Railway opens through Haslemere and Liphook
- 1861 Edward I'Anson buys Grayshott Park Estate and builds *Heather Lodge* – first new development in Grayshott
- 1867 Mar: Tennyson rents Grayshott Farm (now Grayshott Hall) for about a year while *Aldworth* is built
- 1876 **Dec 5: Flora Jane Timms born in Juniper Hill, Oxfordshire [Lark Rise]**
- 1884 Professor John Tyndall builds the first house at Hindhead, encouraging other 'eminent men' to follow
- 1892 Walter Chapman takes Grayshott post office
- 1897 October: Arthur Conan Doyle moves into *Undershaw*
- 1898 June: George Bernard Shaw (GBS) spends his honeymoon at *Pitfold House*
Jul: Foundation stone laid of St Luke's church, Grayshott
Sept: **Flora arrives in Grayshott**, aged 21, and lodges with the Chapmans
Nov: GBS rents *Blen Cathra* (now St Edmund's School), Hindhead
- 1899 Jan 28: GBS delivers a 'vigorous oration' at a Peace Meeting in Hindhead
Congregational Hall – Conan Doyle in the chair also spoke
Mar: Flora moves lodgings to 'Mrs Parkhurst'
August: GBS leaves the district
Aug 23: *Fox & Pelican* opens in Grayshott – Flora orders her 'immense ninepenny dinners' from it
Flora starts seeing 'Mr Foreshaw' about this time?
Oct 10: Boer War begins
Edwin enlists for Boer War – meets Flora on Aldershot railway station
- 1900 Jan 6: Boers attack Ladysmith
May 17: Mafeking relieved
Aug 10: John Volckman [*Mr Foreshaw?*] dies at Grayshott, aged 63 – buried in Headley churchyard
Sep: Hindhead telegraph facility opens
Oct 17: St Luke's church, Grayshott, consecrated

Sometime between Sept 1900 and March 1901, Flora leaves Grayshott

- 1901 Jan 22: Queen Victoria dies
Mar 31: Census: Flora at Yateley post office; John Thompson at Aldershot
Jul 29: Walter Chapman murders his wife Emily at Grayshott and is committed to Broadmoor
- 1903 Jan 7: Flora marries John Thompson at St Mary's, Twickenham
Thompsons make home in Winton, a suburb of Bournemouth
- 1910 Jan 12: Annie Symonds marries Harold Oliver Chapman (nephew of Walter) at St Luke's, Grayshott
- 1916 Apr: Flora's brother Edwin killed in action in Belgium
Aug: Thompson family moves from Bournemouth to Liphook
- 1918 Oct 19: Peter Redmond Thompson born in Liphook
- 1921 Book of Flora's poems published: *Bog Myrtle & Peat* – her first publicity – pictured at her typewriter in newspapers
- 1922 Flora begins writing her 'Peverel Papers' nature notes (set mainly around Liphook) for *The Catholic Fireside*
- 1925 Flora helps to write the *Guide to Liphook*
- 1926 Thompsons buy *Woolmer Gate* at Griggs Green
- 1928 Autumn: Thompsons move from Griggs Green to Dartmouth
- 1935 John Thompson retires
- 1937 Aug: 'An Oxfordshire Hamlet in the Eighties' published in *The National Review* – became the start of 'Lark Rise'
- 1938 'Lark Rise' accepted by the Oxford University Press
- 1939 Mar: 'Lark Rise' published
Flora starts writing 'Over to Candleford'
- 1941 Sept: Peter Thompson lost at sea, aged 22
- 1942 Flora writes 'Candleford Green'
- 1944 Flora writes 'Heatherley'
- 1945 Apr: Trilogy of 'Lark Rise to Candleford' published
- 1947 May 21: Flora dies in bed in the evening, aged 70
- 1970 Anne Mallinson discovers the East Hampshire connection
- 1978 Plaque put on house next to old post office in Liphook
- 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: 'Flora's Peverel' performed locally
- 1998 Centenary of Flora's arrival in Grayshott: 'Flora's Heatherley' performed locally
'Heatherley' republished

Further productions by Headley Theatre Club in 2006

July 7, 8 Jobsworth – *radio on stage!*

September 29, 30 Pirates of Penzance

www.headley-village.com/drama/ or 01428 712892 for further details