

Question 1) When was the thrust stage put in the Court House?

It was in for Alfred Nobbs, the first play for which it was used, in 1982. Cameron and Christopher Newton had planned to erect a pavilion on the common. Cameron had purchased the triadic metal grid for the seating in the pavilion from a company in Montreal. When the pavilion was turned down, he took the seating structure and transferred it to the Court House. He thinks that the theatre area was done first during the Court House renovation project. In 1981-82. The balcony had been removed and the three sided grid system for the seats go up over the balcony space. The portable folding seats had also been ordered for the pavilion project.

Question 2) When did the curtain stay up during scene changes?

As soon as Cameron came in 1981, he did away with the curtain. It was a west coast idea.

When they first came the original curtain was still in the theatre and it was a real “bear” (his quote) to bring up and down. It was being stored in the flies taking up valuable space so he had it removed to storage in the warehouse at the Shepherd Boat works sometime during the winter of 1980-1981. By the time of the fire – 1984 – the curtain had mildewed so badly that archives refused to take it and so it was quietly taken to the dump.

Second, a replacement red curtain was produced by Robin Craven (?) because French farces demanded a curtain but most plays, 8 out of 10, didn’t need a curtain. According to Caroline Mackenzie, the curtain interrupts the drama happening on stage and with scene changes being done in front of the audience, the drama is not interrupted.

However, Cameron had another reason for removing the curtain. Interestingly enough for a set designers, he disliked the custom of the curtain coming up and the audience applauding the set. He felt that it took away from the actors. With the curtain already up, the audience gets a chance to read the programme and look at the set. They realize then, that the set is nothing until the house lights go out and the stage action begins. In other words, the set does not upstage the actors.

An anecdote: One evening, Cameron was having a drink with Heath Lamberts in the Prince of Wales bar when they heard fire engines. They looked out and Heath realized that it was the Royal George where he was going to perform Gunga Heath. Alarmed they both ran down the street, - Cameron thinks without paying the bar bill – to find the fly tower smoldering. Apparently, the workmen were renovating the fly tower when a spark from a welder’s torch started a small fire – fortunately easily put out.