

Lessons for local theatre among the hills of Wales

EDITOR'S NOTE: Georgetown's Enid Williams, who compiles The Herald's weekly fine arts column for the Halton Hills Arts Council and administers the Normic Studio for the Performing Arts, has prepared a second article about her recent visit to Wales, during which she took great interest in the nature of amateur theatre, types of theatrical facilities and comparisons with the situation in Halton Hills.

By ENID WILLIAMS
Herald Special

Morning dawned in a little village near Cardiff, South Wales, marking the beginning of a journey to the West Midlands of England, near the Welsh border.

Travelling Mid Glamorgan through the Rhymney vale towards Monmouth, the countryside was fresh, alive and beautiful. The sun was shining, which seemed rare during the three weeks spent in Britain, and the dew on the lush grass of the countryside, gave me a thirst.

While the journey progressed, the eye was treated to rolling hills and pastures divided by wire fences. These fences, bordered with low bushes, made the rural area look very natural. Sheep grazing along the roadside moved to the road causing traffic to wait for the "thick" creatures to move.

As the bus passed through Abergavenny and Hereford, the eye was drawn to the unspoiled pockets of rural land. Once in Shrewsbury, my destination, and after a telephone call requiring assistance from a local resident, my friend made a fast trek to the bus depot, where our reunion was very demonstrative. An evening of talk, laughs and stories ensued. For those who have fond memories of Cherrie Matthews, known to theatrical enthusiasts, you will be glad to know she is well, the same warm-hearted person, and that she has arrived in Canada for the summer, to return September 12.

REUNION LUNCHEON
The next day, Cherrie's mother, aunt and herself, all graduates of Radbrook College in Shrewsbury, made me their guest at a reunion luncheon which was a delightful social event. Radbrook College was established in 1901 and over the years has held a good reputation throughout Britain. Now known as Radbrook Centre for Catering and Management Studies, it boasts a Culinary Museum begun four years ago by a few staff members. The museum comprises a kitchen and scullery and in the main, typifies a kitchen in the Victorian era.

A Victorian range was installed by voluntary help and an old earthenware sink has been fitted which stood in a cottage of an old stabling block in South Shropshire at the end of the 17th century. A minute, cast iron metal mold for sweets caught my eye, as well as a meat jack which has a metal pin to hold the meat over the fire, and when the key is turned, the meat would slowly turn while cooking.

A dress worn by students at the turn of the century as well as a pair of black faced boots dating back to 1860 were on view. Samples of stitchery done by students around 1900 constituted a work of art, cookery books of the same period and a very large copper pan for making jam, were displayed with authenticity.

This particular day finished by seeing a production of "Ensus" by Peter Shaffer performed by the Shropshire County Drama Group, directed by a well-known, highly-esteemed personage, Bert Amies. The play takes place in Rokeley Psychiatric Hospital in Southern England. The cast handled the play well, but the star was the young man playing Alan Strang, who was under treatment, played by Nick Jones. A talent scout from "pro" theatre certainly should have been there.

YOUNG TALENT
It is most unusual to see such outstanding talent in one so young. The play was mounted in the round in a theatre of modest facilities.

The director used great ingenuity and courage in improvising or creating a setting which worked for the audience all but one side. Shrewsbury hopes to have this old building renovated with raked seating and a proper stage in the future. This production was built to meaningful peaks, mainly by the young actor mentioned. The properties for the horse-men were professional and lighting effects completed an artistic complement to the cast. The two young performers handled the nudity scene with artistic naturalness which was tasteful and not offensive to most. An evening of good theatre was enjoyed in the county of Shropshire, England.

As my trip back to Wales began with sunshine, within a five-hour period, the weather

changed to rain, sleet, sun and soft flakey snow before arriving at my destination. Hard to believe, but here in the country of choral music and passion for rugby union, you may experience all the seasons in one day.

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BREAKING INTO SHOW BUSINESS

Sheila Kimberley of the Dick and Sheila comedy team hammed it up with a few of the local youngsters at Hornby's garden party Saturday. Sheila led the youngsters in an animal game song, with each kid adopting the role of a familiar story

book animal. The variety show was hosted by Lee Paul of the Paul Brothers and Shirley, a popular Canadian vaudeville act. (Herald photo)

Radbrook College was

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