It was in April 1914 that Shaw’s *Pygmalion* was first produced in the West End. Mrs Patrick Campbell was Eliza, Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree played Higgins and Bernard Shaw (who directed the play) was at his wits’ end trying to control the rebellious duo.

It wasn’t just that Stella Patrick Campbell was in her fiftieth year when she played the teenage flower girl, or that Tree was frequently absent from rehearsals: the three principals had distinctly different ideas about what they were trying to do.

Tree insisted on turning it into a love story – giving Eliza bunches of flowers on stage. Stella was at her most irritating, retreating to her stage-level dressing-room to pound the grand piano she’d had installed there. (Stella had trained for a time as a concert pianist.) She did her piano practice when not needed on stage -- or when she had stormed off in a sulk. (above: *Eliza* by Kate Carew).

There were many problems with Stella. Shaw had fallen in love with her, and been humiliated when he tried to seduce her at the seaside. He had called her “an infamous, vile, heartless, wicked, frivolous woman” and said he could “tear her limb from limb”.

There had been a cooling-off period, with Shaw and Stella not speaking, until she failed in JM Barrie’s *The Adored One* and came crawling back. But she “couldn’t act with Beerbohm Tree” who had “treated her abominably” – even though he owned and managed the magnificent His Majesty’s Theatre, where Shaw wanted to do the play.
Shaw’s relations with Tree also deteriorated. Tree had built a career on colourful characters, such as Shakespeare’s Richard II (left) or Svengali in Trilby (right) and resented the fact that Professor Higgins did not have a Scottish accent, or a limp, or anything to make him ‘interesting’.

“Just say the lines,” Shaw intoned wearily, trying to dissuade Tree from vaulting the piano. (Shaw later observed that Tree’s acting was “a raving absurdity” and that Shaw had “writhed in Hell” when watching him. The Telegraph critic, on the other hand, said “When some scenes go more quickly, the acting will be as near perfection as anything in this world.”)

There was, therefore, plenty of drama before the play opened, not least fuelled by Tree’s telling the press that Stella would say a “forbidden word”. The word, of course, was “bloody” as in Eliza saying “Not bloody likely” when Freddy asks her if she is walking across the park. The word had seldom, if ever, been heard on the stage and carriages jammed the West End to see if Mrs Patrick Campbell would dare to say it. (left: Mrs Patrick Campbell as Eliza)

When she did, it brought the house down. The Sketch said the audience “rocked to and fro in their seats and shook with laughter. They roared with laughter. They cried with laughter.” Tree had got cold feet and tried to suppress the forbidden word,
afraid he would lose his knighthood, since royalty were present. The play, however, was a smash-hit success and Bernard Shaw woke the next morning to find he had achieved the popular success that had eluded him.

**Feature film**

All this is the subject of a planned new feature film, called *ELIZA*. It deals with Shaw’s ‘love affair’ with Mrs Patrick Campbell, who was his original inspiration, and the jealousy it provoked. Shaw’s wife, Charlotte, was overcome with jealousy, became prostrate with asthma and bronchitis, and took up with a guru with whom she subsequently went to America.

‘Mrs Pat’ (*above*) had become a star years earlier in Pinero’s *The Second Mrs Tanqueray*. Shaw was entranced with her at the time, and later in such classics as *Romeo and Juliet*, where she appeared with Johnston Forbes Robertson. By the time of *Pygmalion*, Stella Patrick Campbell was on “the crest of a wave which was soon to crash on to a hard and stony beach,” as one author put it. She was like a prima donna – rude, confrontational and arrogant, though a huge popular favourite.

‘Mrs Pat’ had also had a crash in a taxi, which caused a haemorrhage in her brain and left her ill for months (allowing Shaw to spend many hours in her bedroom). Despite all the dramas offstage, *Pygmalion* was of course finally produced to huge public acclaim. It was not only a success on stage: Shaw won an Oscar for the film version -- the only man ever to have that accolade and to win a Nobel Prize for Literature as well. (*above left: stamp commemorating *Pygmalion*)
After Shaw’s death Lerner and Loewe turned the play into a musical, the film version of which won eight Oscars. (Before that, My Fair Lady had been the longest running show on Broadway.)

The new feature film, telling the story behind Pygmalion and its various triumphs and disasters, was originally devised by the editor of this journal, Phillip Riley. He developed a treatment and a storyboard giving the period ‘flavour’ of the film and interested a production company in making it.

Now a screenplay has been developed by the director Jonathan Glendening in association with Phillip. Part of the film’s inspiration also derives from Richard Huggett’s book The Truth About Pygmalion, for which the film company has acquired the film and television rights. (Further information from producer David Braithwaite at Big Man Films. email: david@bigmanfilms.co.uk)

Over the years

There have been many famous stage productions of Pygmalion over the years. Two recent successes have been Peter Hall’s version in 2008 and the one featuring Rupert Everett and Kara Tointon (right, 2011).

For the centenary, the Theatre Royal, Bath have produced Pygmalion starring Alistair McGowan as Henry Higgins. He
is a BAFTA award-winning actor described as “an impressionist comic and writer, now turned formidable actor, with appearances in Art, Cabaret and The Mikado in West End theatres.” He received an Olivier award nomination for his role in Little Shop of Horrors.

Rula Lenska is Mrs Higgins. She’s a well-known stage and TV actress, having performed in many dramas from Calendar Girls to Coronation Street. Famous plays also include 84 Charing Cross Road and Pride and Prejudice. A relative newcomer, Rachel Barry, plays Eliza. She was also Juliet in Romeo and Juliet at the Dell, Stratford. (Above right: Professor Higgins, his mother and Eliza Doolittle.)

Alfred Doolittle is played by Jamie Foreman (below). Some critics thought he stole the show with his muscular performance. He has appeared in Gary Oldman’s Nil by Mouth and played Bill Sykes in Roman Polanski’s Oliver Twist. He has recently appeared in EastEnders.

**Sir Michael Holroyd**

To mark the centenary occasion, there are programme notes from Michael Holroyd, Shaw’s authorised biographer and Shaw Society President.

He writes about the background to the play, written some 15 weeks before the First World War, and comments on Shaw’s feelings for Mrs Patrick Campbell, the first Eliza. These were strongly affected by his mother’s death. “Early in 1913, Shaw’s mother died. It was as if
the source of her son’s unloveableness and need for emotional protection vanished. He found himself violently in love with Stella [Patrick Campbell] – something he had never experienced before, not even with his wife Charlotte.

“But Stella humiliated him and married George Cornwallis-West (left). He was a hyphenated name like the brainless Freddie Eynsford-Hill in the play. Shaw was deeply wounded. Of his 57 years, he wrote: ‘I have suffered 20 and worked 37. Then I had a moment’s happiness…I risked the breaking of deep roots and sanctified ties’.”

Michael Holroyd also describes the social context of the play and Shaw’s intentions in writing it. “Shaw’s ideal, which he wished to impose on the 20th century, was equality. He looked for equality of income and equality of accent. ‘The reformer we need most today is an energetic phonetic enthusiast’, Shaw wrote in the preface to Pygmalion.

“Such methods of cutting down social barriers,” says Holroyd, “were his gestures towards removing the power for change from financiers and fighting men. His dream was of a revolution without bloodshed and misery. The voice tests that Higgins gives Doolittle’s illegitimate daughter, Eliza, are a foretaste of the respectable voice tuition given to prime ministers Edward Heath and Margaret Thatcher.”

Michael Holroyd also mentions the fact that Franz Lehar (photo, right) the composer famous for The Merry Widow, wanted to make a musical of Pygmalion. Shaw strongly rejected the proposal. Commenting on any possible romantic liaison between Eliza and Higgins, Holroyd says: “When a modern audience sees Eliza’s predicament, it asks: ‘Why can’t Eliza marry Higgins and have a job?’ That was not a valid question a century ago.”
Mark Fisher

Mark Fisher also wrote programme notes for the centenary production of *Pygmalion*, describing some of the social conditions of the time. “For all his progressive ideas about phonetics, Professor Henry Higgins never doubts his right to use Eliza Doolittle as a sociological guinea-pig. He assumes he can do with her as he pleases. For reasons of class and gender, Eliza has little control over her fate.

“At the time of *Pygmalion*’s writing in spring of 1912, such attitudes would not have been thought unusual. Great social changes were afoot, but it had been only in 1870, when Shaw was already a teenager, that the Married Women’s Property Act had been passed. This meant that, for the first time, a man did not have the right to hold on to his wife’s belongings after a divorce. The possibility that a woman was an independent being and not the property of a father or husband was a relatively new idea.”

It is worth remembering, apropos of this comment of Fisher’s, that Higgins actually buys Eliza from her father for £5.

Mark Fisher goes on to remind us of the kind of conditions Eliza would have come from. “In the slums of the East End, families would live ten to a room, clean water was a luxury, children went barefoot (*photo, right*) and it was usual for a 13-year-old girl to be sent out to work.” Fisher also quotes the 19th century reformer, Henry Mayhew, who argued that “the low rate of wages that the female classes receive, in return for the most arduous and wearisome of labour, was the greatest cause of prostitution.” (This, of course, is the subject of Bernard Shaw’s play *Mrs Warren’s Profession*.)
Professor Conolly

Leonard Conolly (below), a man of considerable academic distinction and a past president of the International Shaw Society, also wrote programme notes for the Bath production of *Pygmalion*.

He commented on Sir Herbert Tree’s acting, which Shaw had strongly criticised. Conolly quotes one critic of the time who said: “Tree seemed to improvise his way through the role and rely more on invention than memory.” He also, as noted earlier,

tried to create romantic links between Higgins and Eliza, causing Bernard Shaw to say “Tree behaved like a bereaved Romeo on opening night.”

Tree (*poster, right*) also persuaded Mrs Patrick Campbell to get into the romantic mood, so that she “gazed feelingly” at the ring Higgins gave her, rather than “flinging it away in a tearing rage” as Shaw had directed. Professor Conolly also points out that Shaw wrote various endings to the play, to get away from the idea of a romantic link between Eliza and Higgins. He wrote a prose sequel, too, published in 1916, in which he describes Eliza’s post-Higgins life. She marries Freddy and “the married couple set up a florist and greengrocer business…The shop is full of fashionable customers. Eliza is behind the counter ‘in great splendor’ serving flowers, while Freddy, ‘in apron
and mild muttonchop whiskers’ looks after the vegetables”.

“But Shaw was thwarted once more when, in the film version, the producer Gabriel Pascal quietly discarded Shaw’s script and filmed a different ending. This showed, not the independent businesswoman that Shaw wanted, but a subservient Eliza returning to Higgins’s home to help her mentor and master find his slippers…

“Producers of Pygmalion in the United Kingdom and abroad” says Conolly, “have continued to play fast and loose with romanticising Pygmalion, most (in)famously after Shaw’s death in 1950, with the melodious but saccharine 1956 Broadway adaptation My Fair Lady and the subsequent film version in 1964.”

*****************************************************************

Pygmalion celebrated at Ayot

An outdoor celebration of the centenary of Pygmalion took place at Shaw’s Corner, Ayot St Lawrence, Shaw’s country home. It took place in the afternoon of Saturday, 12th April, when actors took to the stage and delivered readings from the play. Visitors were also invited to join in and prizes were awarded for the best costumes. (See right) There was a report on ITV News Anglia and a short interview with Lizzie Dunford, Assistant House Steward, who helped organise the event.

*****************************************************************

Summer Play Productions

Every year at Shaw’s Corner two plays are produced by Michael Friend Productions. This year they will be:

The Philanderer 27-29 June
and Heartbreak House 25-27 July
The Eliza who became a Duchess

One girl who played Eliza Doolittle really did go on to become a duchess.

We refer to Kate Middleton, who played Eliza at school and is now the Duchess of Cambridge. The story emerged via a video clip of Kate at elementary school (extract left). Several newspapers and magazines have taken it up. For instance, *Vanity Fair*, who state that “Kate exhibits a regal, downright noble presence onstage” even at 11-years-old. (You can see for yourself at *VanityFair.com*). Kate certainly went on to develop a style rivalling even that of Audrey Hepburn, who starred as Eliza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady* – dressed by Cecil Beaton. *(right)*

*The Daily Mail* noted that Kate’s “love interest” in the school production was Andrew Alexander. He went on to become an accomplished actor, recently appearing as Sir John Bullock in ITV’s *Downton Abbey*.

This brings us to another Eliza who made it to the aristocracy. Michelle Dockery, who plays Lady Mary Crawley in *Downton*, was a notable Eliza Doolittle *(left)* in Peter Hall’s
production of 2008. Her raucous, open-mouthed raggedness contrasts severely with the understated, blue-blooded Lady Mary (below).

Both these girls came from relatively humble backgrounds. Michelle’s father was a van driver when she was born and Kate’s antecedents, the Harrisons, were described as “working class labourers and miners”.

All of which, perhaps, says something about how class and society has changed since Bernard Shaw wrote about it.

********************************

George and the Shavians

Kate Middleton and family continue to provide interesting links with Shaw and the Shavians.

Today we have the story of her performing as Eliza Doolittle at school. Last time we reported on the portrait of Shaw that looked down on the christening of Prince George. (It was part of the late Queen Mother’s collection, painted by Augustus John).

Recently, George has been much photographed on his first ‘Royal tour’ of New Zealand – not least when wearing dungarees with a cute little ship on the front. This outfit was designed by Rachel Riley, daughter of Phillip Riley, editor of this journal. She designs clothes for adults and children. Pity he’s called George, though, GBS’s least favourite name!
I attended a performance of *Pygmalion* (the Theatre Royal, Bath production, on tour at Richmond Theatre). It was directed by the award-winning David Grindley. The play induced much laughter and applause, particularly for Jamie Foreman as Alfred Doolittle and Alistair Mc Gowan as Henry Higgins.

In the programme there were erudite and enlightening articles by Michael Holroyd, Mark Fisher and Leonard Conolly. They reminded us that *Pygmalion* was first performed in 1914, shortly before the start of World War I. It was, however, written in 1912 -- a period of great social change, not least for women. Shaw’s preface from 1912 clearly indicates his serious interest in phonetics and his opinion that, “troubled with accents that cut them off from high employment” (and with poor grammar) working class people were severely handicapped. Professor Conolly also wrote: “Shaw was fighting an uphill battle to present Eliza as a strong and independent woman”.

Sir Michael Holroyd says: “Rehearsals and many later productions became a nightmare for Shaw, everyone wanting Eliza to marry Higgins”. Mark Fisher describes the squalid conditions, hunger, high infant mortality and fear of eviction in London’s slums. Eliza’s flower-selling was a “step-up from the dangers, indignity and exploitation” of prostitution. (above: grim depiction of a Covent Garden flower-seller of the time by Gustave Dore)

The popular wish for romantic endings, not only in the musical adaptation, has obscured Shaw’s serious message about the English language and its influence on social status. Surely *Pygmalion* should not be presented as so bloody funny?

*Helen Bennett is a member of the Shaw Society and serves on its committee and that of the Bernard Shaw Theatre Project.*
SHAW AND SEX

On 25th April, Alan Knight, Shaw Society chairman, gave a talk on GBS and Sexuality, enlivened by readings from three of his plays. It gave rise to a lively Question and Answer session afterwards.

The word sexuality here is not used in any sensationalist or provocative way – indeed most people would think it unlikely to have much application to the plays of GBS. How much do his plays contain sexuality? And what meaning does the word have beyond the simpler sounding ‘sex’? Perhaps sexuality refers to an ambience while sex refers to action.

Over the last weekend, Radio 3 ran a performance of Shakespeare’s Antony & Cleopatra, and you didn’t have to listen for long to recognise a play drenched in sexuality. The description of Cleopatra as a woman who, in the act of love, “makes hungry where most she satisfies” tells us almost ominously of a relationship powerfully rooted in sexuality.

Similarly, last Thursday I saw a new Ayckbourn play on tour in Bath, The Things We Do for Love. The action took place on three floors of a house. We were given a full view of the ground floor flat, a partial view of the lower ground floor, and of the first floor we saw as much as was possible below a masking border that virtually touched the duvet on a bed. We could see to the height of the duvet cover and only the legs or sides of dressing tables, chests of drawers, etc. And actors were only visible to
mid thigh. This was the set for the first hour of the play, mostly consisting of polite social banter, when suddenly the married man from the first floor and the girl from the ground floor make advances to each other, rush into the bed upstairs and at once we know why we have been shown so little of the upstairs room. We glimpse the girl’s hair and different arms, legs and heads as the abandoned couple throw themselves across and around the bed as the curtain falls. With nothing visible to give offence, this was an explicit scene of sex that cleverly extended a lightweight story for Act 2 development.

**Making love**

In the case of GBS, it is likely in his own drama that had he attempted either such effect, verbal or visual, it would have been banned by the censor, of whom he regularly complained. (Mistakes can be made: the opening stage direction for *The Philanderer* tells us “a lady and gentleman are making love to one another in the drawing room of a flat in the Victoria area.... seated affectionately side by side in one another’s arms.” I remember this instruction giving one of my students considerable difficulty some 20 years ago. ‘Making love’ obviously means something quite different now from when Shaw wrote it.)

Another factor, however, comes into play here: namely Shaw’s view of the place of sex in the life of the human creature. This is a factor that stems both from his intellectual position and sociological upbringing. Two or three years ago I attempted to set out Shaw’s response to Darwin’s theory of Evolution: mankind, Shaw felt, was only half-evolved, half-developed. To attain proper development meant to rise to a condition of pure thought. It was necessary to shed the greater part of the sensual life which merely holds us back. Following Buddhist thinking, suffering ceases with desire; hence the ideal human goal is to conquer desire.

(There followed a reading from *The Philanderer*, in which Charteris says to Juliet “I have a right to belong to myself” and tells her that he owes her nothing. He ends by describing her as a “jealous termagent”.)

*The Philanderer* both satirises and endorses the new Ibsenism (much of the play takes place at the Ibsen Club) and fully reveals Leonard Charteris’s attempt to escape the bounds of love which society
and the sex drive require. This play is supposedly based on Shaw’s experience when the older woman, Jenny Patterson (right) hoped to marry him while he was also seeing Florence Farr. By and large, the play shows indiscriminate irony towards a number of targets: Ibsenism, the new women, the medical profession, the snobbery within the club system.

But the open-ended, indeed unfinished, ending of *The Philanderer* is also true of several other more popular Shavian plays – *Pygmalion* being the most obvious example, where Shaw’s wish that Eliza does not return to Higgins at the end is mostly overruled, particularly in the *My Fair Lady* version.

Let us look at other examples. I will start with what I consider Shaw’s finest achievements: *Major Barbara* and *Heartbreak House*. In the first, such is the emphasis on Barbara’s glory in prayer meetings and saving souls (followed by the exploration of Undershaft’s triumphant armaments complex) that the lighthearted romance growing between Barbara and Cussins is barely ever central to the action. He, a professor in Classics, is rendered harmless by Barbara’s nickname for him: Dolly. In *Heartbreak House*, Ellie Dunn arrives smitten with love for Marcus Darnley, only to find that he is Hector, the posturing husband of her hostess Hesione Hushaby, who knows that allowing her husband a long leash is a way of keeping him. Ellie will then find solace with the octogenarian Captain Shotover, only to discover that his challenging, seafaring memories are largely the product of rum. (cont. page 16)

*****************************************************************

“I was not impotent;
I was not sterile; I was not homosexual.”

*Bernard Shaw: Sixteen Self Sketches*
“Sexual experience seemed a natural appetite, and its satisfaction a completion of human experience necessary for fully qualified authorship.”

Bernard Shaw

(photos shows Mr and Mrs Dubedat in the National Theatre production of The Doctor’s Dilemma, 2013)

The first scene of Arms and the Man is set almost saucily in the bedroom of Raina, into which an escaping soldier (Bluntschli) intrudes. But Raina is in no danger. Instead, Bluntschli will instruct her in the value of a bar of chocolate in the war and she will come to see her hero, Sergius, for the strutting fool he is.

In Caesar and Cleopatra, Shaw will ignore history and, after a tender meeting at the Sphinx, Caesar (well into middle-age) will see Cleopatra not as a bed-partner and mother of his child, but as a young woman in need of a civilising education. The core of the play is her training as a thoughtful alert politician. At this point, perhaps, we should listen to another of Shaw’s “romantic” scenes. (There followed a reading from The Apple Cart).

The Apple Cart, which opened in 1927, was revived in Coronation Year with Noel Coward and Margaret Leighton. We have just heard the famous interlude where Magnus leaves his state room and political concerns to visit his mistress, Orinthia. How clever of Shaw to keep it from us that the two have so far conducted “strangely innocent relations” in their daily congress when all along the whole scene has seemed to be a prelude to love making. Once again, the sexuality of the relationship seems curiously dormant.

By and large, a pattern emerges that the Shavian hero is likely to be an older man who sees a younger woman as someone to teach rather than have relationships with. Woman, not man, was the pursuer and aggressor in the sex war according to Shaw. John Tanner in Man and
Superman sees the whole world as “strewn with snares, traps, gins and pitfalls for the capture of men by women”. The spending of sexual energy was connected with the waste of genius. Jack Tanner struggles to preserve his indivisible self. Bernard Shaw said of himself: “I did not pursue women, I was pursued by them.” (This is highly questionable in the case of Ellen Terry and Mollie Tompkins, surely?)

**Loathed sex**

These are some of the conclusions put forward by Margot Peters in *Bernard Shaw and the Actresses* published in USA, 1986. One conclusion is especially memorable: the great man of letters admired and adored feminine intelligence, talent and wit (we have only to think of the correspondence with Mrs Patrick Campbell or Ellen Terry, or to think of the women in the plays so far noted). But she continues “He loathed and feared romance, marriage and sex”.

**“Shaw’s twin inheritance: genius and homosexuality”**

This leads us into the second section of the evening’s speculation. I talked earlier of psychological factors in Shaw’s upbringing that play a part in his self-presentation. A later book to offer insights of this kind is *Bernard Shaw: The Ascent of the Superman* by Sally Peters, published by Yale University in 1996 (no relation to Margot Peters, our previous author). Sally Peters makes it her task to chart Shaw’s “convoluted and extravagant inner life studded with erotic secrets”. Certainly she has no intention to prolong the image of Joey, the white bearded clown. The “erotic secrets” are quite explicitly linked to the “genius and homosexuality that Shaw believed to be his twin inheritance”. He also believed that it marked him out as one of the supermen, who will bring about the end of capitalism, and become a more developed human being. Attempts to criminalise homosexuality were foolish and obstructive. He wrote to Lady Astor, after her son was imprisoned on homosexual charges, telling her that her son must not “mistake for a frightful delinquency on his part a condition of which he is no more morally responsible than colour blindness”.

17
The case of Oscar Wilde was far from being the only one of its sort to come into public view during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Havelock-Ellis in 1897 published the first analytical study of “sexual inversion” which aimed to clarify homosexuality as a psychological condition. It was a “simple abnormality”, to which he gave the curious name “Uranian feelings” – feelings which Shaw said were a step towards the creature of pure thought, the superman. In a reply to a diatribe on the degeneracy of Europe from a German writer Max Nordau (it covered Wagner, Ibsen, Walt Whitman, Tolstoy and Havelock-Ellis), Shaw wrote, “Every step of the superman’s progress must horrify conventional people, and if it were possible for even the most superior man to march ahead all the time, every pioneer of the march towards the superman would be crucified”. Shaw, Granville Barker and Gilbert Murray (the model for Professor Cussins in *Major Barbara*) were members of the British society for the study of sex psychology. One final figure not to be forgotten in this context is Edward Carpenter, poet, writer and political activist, who started an organisation where men of “Uranian feelings” could meet and even possibly develop a new life-style. Shaw visited his organisation several times …

*******************************************************************************

“As man and wife we found a new relation in which sex had no part”

Bernard Shaw

*(Photo shows Charlotte Shaw, Bernard’s wife)*
In 1907, *Caesar and Cleopatra* was presented at the Royal Court Theatre. It was later published as one of Shaw’s *Three Plays for Puritans*, a trio of plays historically unrelated that included *The Devil’s Disciple* and *Captain Brassbound’s Conversion*. They were distinguished by the refusal of the leading protagonists to allow domestic comforts and responsibilities be their purpose in life. Julius Caesar may well be Shaw’s first portrayal of an achieved superman, the embodiment of pure thought. We first find him addressing the Sphinx “in this little world yonder, Sphinx, my place is as high as yours in this great desert. Only I wander and you sit still. I am he of whose genius you are the symbol: part brute, part woman and part god – nothing of man in me at all.”

Inevitably in the 21st century we are bound to ask how far this image of the super outsider may be an enlarged self image of its author.

**Q & A**

Alan Knight’s talk gave rise to a lively Question and Answer session. Several people seemed interested in the possibility that Shaw might be homosexual, following Alan’s remark that Shaw visited “several times” the organisation set up by Edward Carpenter, where men of ‘Uranian (homosexual) feelings’ could meet and possibly develop a new lifestyle.

There was also discussion of Shaw’s friendship with ‘Bosie’, the lover of Oscar Wilde (*right, Wilde and Bosie*). Shaw and Bosie (real name Lord Alfred Douglas) had had a considerable correspondence. Someone also mentioned Gabriel Pascal, the producer of Shaw’s films. Shaw had met him in the South of France, when Pascal was swimming naked. On visiting Shaw’s house some time later, Pascal had asked Shaw’s secretary to announce him as “the man with the brown buttocks”. And was not Shaw himself fond of being photographed naked, sometimes on beaches, sometimes in the company of other men?
One questioner asked if Shaw’s relationship with Harley Granville Barker might have had a homosexual element. They had obviously been close friends, and working partners in the theatre. Someone in Alan’s audience also said “Everyone is bisexual – capable of having sexual relations sometimes with members of their own sex, as well as the opposite sex.” Another referred to Shaw’s remark that he had been in love only twice in his life: “Once in youth, once in middle age.” There was speculation as to who his middle-aged lover might have been. Someone suggested Granville Barker, but someone else thought he had been referring to Stella Patrick Campbell.

Extracts from the plays

MAGNUS: But my wife? The queen? What is to become of my poor dear Jemima?

ORINTHIA: Oh, drown her: shoot her: tell your chauffeur to drive her into the Serpentine and leave her there. The woman makes you ridiculous. *(The Apple Cart)*

Extracts from the plays in Alan’s talk *(The Philanderer, The Apple Cart and Pygmalion)* were read by Hayward Morse (right) and Gay Soper (left). He is an actor of considerable repute and the son of the late Shaw Society President, Barry Morse. She has many West End and musical credits, including Side by Side with Sondheim. One of her favourite roles was in Mother Courage, alongside Diana Rigg at the National. *Alan Knight spent ten years in the theatre, after Cambridge, three of them at the Bristol Old Vic. In 1970, he became a lecturer in drama at universities in Britain and Canada.*
21 YEARS AT AYOT

Michael Friend (right) has been producing plays on the lawns of Shaw’s house since 1993. Michael Sargent asked him some questions about his extraordinary life.

I believe you were at the Royal Court Theatre in the days of John Osborne.

I was there when he made such a revolution in theatre with Look Back in Anger. But John Osborne was an actor, as well as a playwright. I well remember him, for instance, playing alongside Joan Plowright and George Devine in The Making of Moo, a satire on religion. That play by Nigel Dennis caused a furore at the time.

(Below: Richard Burton in Look Back in Anger and the Faber book of the play).

I believe you’ve worked with many famous people?

I was at Aldeburgh with Benjamin Britten. That was in the days I was working in opera.
You’ve had a very exciting career. How did it start?

I started by getting a scholarship to RADA. I’d been trying to get into LAMDA, but failed. Then someone said, ‘Why not try RADA?’ and eventually I got in. I took an acting course. But I actually started in the theatre as a Stage Manager.

How did that happen?

I heard there was a job going in Leatherhead. In those days, the best way to learn about theatre was to go into weekly rep. In some places I worked, we put on two plays a week – sometimes twice nightly! We put on 30 plays in a year at Leatherhead.

Excellent training. I believe you were also at the Bristol Old Vic?

I was, and at Liverpool Playhouse. One of the things about being an SM was that I was also able to learn how to be a stage carpenter, lighting designer, electrician…you name it.

So you learned several sides of the business?

I did. It was always great fun to me to stay behind after everyone had left the theatre and play around with lighting. I enjoyed running up and down ladders and later, when I became a director, what I’d learned stood me in good stead. I got to know whether ‘experts’ knew what they were talking about, or not.

You mentioned that you’d worked in opera?

Yes, when I heard they wanted an SM at English National Opera. I also did some acting (not singing) at Covent Garden. It was a treat to be on stage with such luminaries as Maria Callas and Joan Sutherland. Eventually, I worked with Welsh National Opera in the 1970s.
Had you always wanted to go on stage?

I suppose I got the bug when I was a child. My father and I would play at theatres under the dining room table. The tablecloth was pulled down, to act as a curtain.

Did your mother influence you to get involved with the stage?

Not really. But when she was a little girl in Birmingham, she had some cousins who came from abroad and taught her to do acrobatic tricks on the back of the sofa. Years later, I looked up this branch of the family and found that two sisters had become professional trickcyclists. I have photos of them.

How did you come to be directing plays at Shaw’s Corner?

For a long time I’d wanted to direct and my chance came with a scheme run by the British Council. The idea was to teach foreign students about classical British drama. So as a fledgling director, I started on the British classics.

Some of them were quite impressive. You did The Country Wife and The Duchess of Malfi, as well as Wesker’s Roots and a play by Harold Pinter. And eventually you directed plays at Shaw’s former house.

This started in 1993, when I took over the play put on in June. Members of the Shaw Society had originally done readings and talks about Shaw. In the early days there were problems with the villagers at Ayot, who were afraid of noise and nuisance from visitors.
Locals come in their hundreds. They bring a picnic and make a night of it. The first real productions were done by the well-known actress (and Shaw Society Vice President), Toni Kanal. She started with her late husband, the jazzman Benny Green.

And the Shaw productions gradually built up?

Yes, in 1992 Toni had set up an acting company called Ayot Productions. She was joined by Richard Digby Day, who also managed the Open Air Theatre at Regent’s Park, so knew about open air productions. Toni and Richard produced plays at Ayot until 2003 but then I took over the play that’s done in July. Two plays are produced in the summer at Ayot. One is in June (known as the Summer Play). The other is near to Shaw’s birthday in July (called the Birthday Play).

I suppose your chief problem is the weather?

There have been occasions when the weather was so bad the actors couldn’t see each other! But, of course, we hope for fine evenings and frequently get them. Otherwise, it’s umbrellas…
It has been announced that Ralph Fiennes (below) one of Britain’s leading actors, will play the part of Jack Tanner in Shaw’s *Man and Superman* next Spring.

This brings to four the number of major Shaw productions put on by the National in eight years – an average of one every other year.

Nicholas Hytner, artistic director of the National Theatre, is on record as saying: “Ten years ago, I thought I hated the garrulous, often facetious plays of George Bernard Shaw. I was wrong; it’s been a wonderful surprise to me to find a massive audience for them, eager to share Shaw’s brilliant provocations about religious fanaticism, the pursuit of money at all costs, arms-dealing and medical ethics. These subjects, and much else, are treated in the three plays we’ve done recently: *Saint Joan*, *Major Barbara* and *The Doctor’s Dilemma.*”

The BBC, another of our great institutions, also remains loyal to Shaw. Between June and October 2013, they produced no fewer than four of his plays: *Mrs Warren’s Profession*, *Androcles and the Lion*, *You Never Can Tell* and *Widowers’ Houses*.

Ralph Fiennes is no stranger to the National Theatre. Indeed, he first achieved stage success there. His latest appearance was in *Oedipus* (as Oedipus) in 2008. He has also played at the RSC (most recently as Brand in Ibsen’s play). He is well-known as a film actor, for such recent performances as Charles Dickens in *The Invisible Woman* (above). He starred in *The End of the Affair* by Graham Greene and won an Academy Award for *The English Patient*. He also starred in John le Carre’s *The Constant Gardener*. 
SHAW SOCIETY BECOMES A CHARITY
At the AGM in February, it was announced that the society is applying for charitable status. For the first time since 1956, a new constitution has been drafted, with the following key objects:

(1) To advance public education and appreciation of the British theatre through the plays, writings and ideas of George Bernard Shaw (“GBS”) and his contemporaries.
(2) To provide opportunities to study, discuss and enjoy the works of GBS and his contemporaries through public performances, readings, films, lectures, talks and articles in the press and the Society’s journal *The Shavian*.
(3) To establish and maintain contact with public educational institutions in the United Kingdom, the United States of America and elsewhere to exchange information about GBS and his contemporaries.
(4) To encourage the pursuit of Shaw’s themes and ideas through awards and bursaries open to the public.
(5) To undertake research, and publish the results, for the purpose of advancing public education as referred to in (1) above.
(6) To promote a wider and better understanding of GBS’s life and work and to provide (in his own words) a “rallying point for the co-operation and education of kindred spirits and a forum for their irreconcilable controversies”.

Shaw “second only to Shakespeare” on TV

A study* has shown that the plays of Bernard Shaw were the second most-performed on BBC television from 1936-1994. Top of the list, not surprisingly, was Shakespeare. Plays of his were performed 235 times. But Shaw came next, with 99 productions. He outperformed Ibsen, Priestley, Chekhov, Coward and Barrie, who were the five next most popular on the list.

*Neil Taylor
*A history of the stage play on BBC Television
TOP NAMES and the TF EVANS AWARDS

The TF Evans awards – for people who can ‘write like Bernard Shaw’ – has been attracting some famous names recently.

One of them is Sylvia Syms, actress and film star, who performed in a rehearsed reading of *The Woman of Destiny* in January. This play was the winner of the third year’s TFE award. It’s a feminist drama about a woman Pope. Sylvia Syms played a nun, called Sister Katherine. Sylvia, of course, has been a famous actress for many years. Her memorable films include *Ice Cold in Alex*, with John Mills and Anthony Quayle, and *Victim*, where she played Dirk Bogarde’s wife.

More recently, she gave a notable performance as the Queen Mother in *The Queen* with Helen Mirren. (below, and left at the premiere) Sylvia says she played much of the film bent double, not only to re-create the Queen Mum’s characteristic walk, but also because Helen Mirren is so much smaller than she is.

*The Woman of Destiny* was written by Patricia Montley of Baltimore, USA. She not only won the 2013 TFE award, but had been a runner-up in a previous year. (This was in the competition that required entrants to write a new scene for an existing Shaw play. Patricia wrote another scene for *Candida*, making Eugene a woman. As with the recent prize-winning play, this was a heavily feminist theme. ‘Eugenia’ as she is now called, attempts to seduce Candida, telling her of all the things she could become – a lawyer, a doctor, even Prime Minister.)
Patricia Montley’s latest play begins with a nun praying. She is called Sister Joan and is soon visited by a *Saint Joan*, who is remarkably like Shaw’s (*played by Rachel Dale, right*)

She wears body armour and speaks with a French accent, although what she says is in contemporary speech. (“Everybody knows me: the astonishing rise from field to fame, the defiant cross-dressing…”)

She seeks to persuade Sister Joan that her destiny is to become that unusual thing, a woman Pope.

She wouldn’t be the first, but the other was in the 9th century, when Rome “was a wild place with girls disguising themselves as boys. It was the only way to get out of the scullery and into school. Dozens of girls who dressed like boys even got to be canonised.” If Sister Joan became Pope now, it would not only demonstrate the equality of women but achieve useful things a male Pope does not. (“We need to move the poor out of poverty. Universal health care, free education, job training, micro-loans to village entrepreneurs,” *Saint Joan* says).

The nun is taken aback. What likelihood is there that she could ever become a female Pope? *Saint Joan* tells her that, though a humble nun, she has connections that could prove invaluable. When she asks what they are, she is advised to consult Bessie, her mother in the USA. Bessie eventually tells her that she is not, in fact, her real mother, who is another nun called Sister Katharine. It transpires that Katharine gave the baby over to her sister Bessie, to be brought up as her daughter, since Sister Katharine did not want to give up her religious vocation.

A visit to a certain Cardinal (Henry Cardinal Gardner) sheds light on this. Sister Katharine has given Sister Joan a letter, which had suggested that the baby should be got rid of by abortion. Enclosed with the letter is a cheque and the address of a suitable doctor. It transpires that the Cardinal was the father – and that he was also the person who wrote the letter recommending the abortion. As he also sent the cheque, Sister Joan has now enough incriminating material to twist his arm. She needs his help to get her into the position of being a
female cardinal – a necessary step on the road to becoming Pope. (The male cardinal was secretly smoking a cigarette when we first saw him – so we knew from the start that he was a bad lot!)

Thus Patricia Montley deals with the sort of issues a contemporary Shaw might have written about. (Competition entrants had been asked to write a one-act play in the style of Bernard Shaw on a subject that might interest him.) Her character of Saint Joan wants a fair deal for women, and relief for the poor and oppressed. (“I wanted to bring a little sense into the situation,” she says. “Get some gals involved in the whole decision-making thing. But the guys didn’t want any part of it. Still don’t.”)

Also appearing in *The Woman of Destiny* was the daughter of Sylvia Syms, Beatie Edney (left). She has worked in the theatre with such notable writers as Christopher Hampton (*Les Liaisons Dangereuses*) and Terry Johnson (*Dead Funny*). She also had a West End success in Alan Bennett’s *The Madness of George III*. She has made over 50 film and TV appearances, starting at the age of six in Roman Polanski’s *A Day at the Beach*. Other films include Evelyn Waugh’s *A Handful of Dust* and Anne Bronte’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.

**Best-seller**

A writer who has displayed talents in several directions is **Amy Bird**, who also wrote a play for the 2013 TF Evans Award. She was a runner-up and received a certificate of commendation from Shaw Society chairman, Alan Knight. This took place at the Society’s AGM in February, when there was also a rehearsed reading of Amy’s play *The Jobseeker*. 

29
Amy (below) is a lawyer, dealing with questions of employment when not engaged in writing plays and novels (of which more later). Her play for the TFE awards concerns a man who is looking for work. Not an unheard of situation in today’s world, but this man is unusual in two respects: he carries a gun, and wants one of 5000 jobs he has seen publicised, but which actually don’t exist.

They don’t exist because they are part of a PR exercise – one of those situations where a firm (possibly after a successful takeover or some reorganisation) boasts that it is creating “thousands of new jobs”. Amy was inspired to write the play when she read a newspaper piece saying “Asda creates 5000 jobs, but has it got its sums right?” She wondered how real such jobs were.

The jobseeker in the play (Mr Small) is fobbed off by the receptionist. Not only are there no new jobs, she asserts, but he hasn’t even been scheduled for an interview. On the other hand, Mr Small has a powerful argument: he has a gun. He persuades the receptionist to get him into the presence of the Chief Executive, by the simple expedient of holding his daughter at gunpoint.

The play is a comedy (despite its macabre theme) and at one point the jobseeker also steps into the audience and shoots someone when told there isn’t even a single vacancy. ("There is now.")

The play features a journalist, who does have an interview – but it is a different kind of interview, one for her newspaper. She enlivens the action by summing up what is happening in a series of catchy headlines.

What makes Amy Bird a “top name” is that she is also a best-selling novelist. The very first novel she wrote, *Yours is Mine*, became a number one best-seller on both sides of the Atlantic. It is a psychological thriller, which got to the Number 1 position on the Amazon US Women’s Crime Chart in March (having previously achieved bestseller status in the UK). The plot of Amy’s novel
concerns two women, who change identities. (“Kate Dixon is miserable, so when an email arrives from psychology student Anna, offering her a no-strings-attached three month long life-exchange, she jumps at the chance.”) But all does not go according to plan and Kate discovers that “leaving your life in someone else’s hands is a dangerous game”. Amy was inspired to write **Yours is Mine** (right) when a friend’s bag got stolen. “What’s the most important thing you could lose?” she wondered, and came up with the answer: “Identity. What if you lost your identity?” Amy has written a second novel, **Three Steps Behind You**, which was published in March. Her books are available from Carina UK, which is the digital imprint of Harlequin. Amy also does a blog at [www.amybirdwrites.com/blog](http://www.amybirdwrites.com/blog)

**High calibre**

So it appears that the TF Evans awards are attracting writers, actors and creative people of very high calibre. Last year’s winner, Patricia Montley, has had 14 plays published, which have received nearly 200 presentations. She has taught playwriting at such august institutions as John Hopkins University and her plays have had readings in many places in the USA, including the Kennedy Center.

Sylvia Syms, apart from her acting activities, was also a judge in the 2013 awards, as was Edward Kemp, head of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA). Another successful name associated with the Awards was **John Dixon**. He received a certificate of commendation for an updated preface to Shaw’s play *The Millionairess* in 2012. *(photo: Sophia Loren and Peter Sellers in the film version).* John Dixon also wrote a collection of short stories, the title story of
which, *The Carrier Bag*, won a Bridport Short Story Prize, the judge being Margaret Drabble.

**Son of Evans**

The 2013 award ceremony was introduced by Christopher Evans (there is a tradition that the awards are presented each year by a son of TF Evans, whose family funded the awards). Christopher made an amusing speech, referring to his father as someone who hated modern technology and could never be persuaded to give up his ancient typewriter, whatever improvements might have occurred in word processing and computing during his 40-year career as editor of this publication, *The Shawian*.

The TF Evans awards have now for three years produced fine writing inspired by the example of Bernard Shaw. This year’s competition invites entrants to devise correspondence in the manner of Shaw, who was of course famous as a letter-writer. (It would be interesting to know what he would have done now, in a world of emails, not to mention texting and mobiles). Details of the competition are on the Society’s website at [www.shawsociety.org.uk](http://www.shawsociety.org.uk)

---

The Shaw Society / T F Evans award

**Could you write like Bernard Shaw?**

This annual writing award, in memory of the late T F Evans, will be offered for the fourth time in 2014 — for a set of letters which Shaw might have written if he were alive today, and reflecting the wit and wisdom for which he was renowned.

An award of £500 will be made for the winning entry

Further information and details of how to enter are on the Society’s website: [www.shawsociety.org.uk](http://www.shawsociety.org.uk)

Closing date for entries: 30 September 2014
WEINTRAUB FILM AT AYOT

Stanley Weintraub, the senior living Shaw scholar, has been making films at Bernard Shaw’s country house. In four days he ranged over many subjects, talking about Shaw at home, his activities as a playwright and his reputation. Weintraub was interviewed by Martin Wright, former producer and director with BBC Education and the Open University. Stanley Weintraub (left) is well-placed to talk about Shaw. He has written many books about him, since he first did his doctoral dissertation on Shaw’s novels.

Weintraub’s interest in Shaw began while reading his plays in Penguin when he was serving as an army officer in Korea. (He has also just written a book about the Korean War). His other books include The Unexpected Shaw; The Portable Bernard Shaw; Bernard Shaw and the London Art Scene and Shaw’s People: Victoria to Churchill.

In 2011, he published Who’s Afraid of Bernard Shaw? It dealt with those of Shaw’s contemporaries who were afraid of being put into his plays – such as Virginia Woolf, who was the model for Lady Utterwood in Heartbreak House. (She and Shaw had an up-and-down relationship and she complained of boredom while watching his plays. “Shaw kept us on the rack three hours last night,” she said after seeing Misalliance. But they became friends, and she eventually took over his house in Fitzroy Square. Beatrice Webb was also ‘afraid’ of appearing in one of Shaw’s plays: she became the witchlike virago in The Millionairess).

Heartbreak House

During the course of the Ayot filming, Weintraub talked a good deal about Heartbreak House. This was because 2014 is the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of World War I and Shaw had much to say on the subject. Heartbreak House takes place on the eve of the war and depicts a set of people who are drifting towards disaster. Weintraub
also wrote a book about the play: *Journey to Heartbreak (The Crucible Years of Bernard Shaw)*.

During the filming, Stanley Weintraub was also amused to find a party of people from the TE Lawrence Society visiting the house. He said that they seemed “in shock” to discover how much time ‘Lawrence of Arabia’ had spent at Shaw’s country home. “When I first visited Shaw’s Corner in 1961,” said Weintraub, “one upstairs bedroom was known as ‘Lawrence’s Room’. He visited often, from Bovington Camp in Dorset, on his motorcycle”. (Lawrence was killed on a motorcycle in 1935, at the age of 46. For some years, he had been seeking anonymity, first by joining the RAF with the name of ‘Ross’, later joining the army and calling himself ‘Private Shaw’. Stanley Weintraub wrote a book (*left*) with the punning title *Private Shaw and Public Shaw: A Dual Portrait of Lawrence of Arabia and GBS.*

*The films, which are currently being edited, are the property of the National Trust. They will be used for the education of visitors and will also appear on TV and social media, such as The History Channel and You Tube.*

“Bernard Shaw wrote tens of millions of words for publication, took an active part in politics, directed his own plays, lectured, philandered (though only early on), married, thought up dozens of philosophies, listened to music (and kept abreast of new composers), immersed himself in countless causes and controversies and, presumably, from time to time, slept. (He did not eat, of course, which must have helped.)”

**Bernard Levin, 1988**
(Reviewing the Collected Letters edited by Dan H Laurence)
Eileen Atkins as Ellen Terry

Eileen Atkins (below) performed as Ellen Terry in the new Sam Wanamaker Playhouse in February.

She was recreating some lectures Terry wrote and presented in her later years. Some of them were about Shakespeare’s heroines, offering some of the finest passages from the plays, and Terry’s thoughts on the characters.

Some of her conclusions were surprising. She didn’t see Lady Macbeth, for instance, as a monster but as “a delicate, sensitive creature with nerves”. Terry also visited a lunatic asylum to get some insight into Ophelia’s madness. “It wasn’t helpful,” she reported. “The inmates were too theatrical.”

Eileen Atkins has received much praise for her performance. “The chief glory is to hear Atkins speaking some of Shakespeare’s finest speeches with such superb clarity and feeling,” said Charles Spencer of the *Daily Telegraph*. Another critic, Michael Billington of the *Guardian*, said “If the BBC does not go and record Atkins’s masterclass in acting…I shall chain myself to the portals of Broadcasting House.”

Ellen Terry, of course, maintained a 30-year correspondence with Bernard Shaw. He described it as “a paper courtship – perhaps the pleasantest and most enduring of courtships.” According to the actor, John Gielgud (who was Ellen Terry’s great-nephew) Shaw also said that “she had a genius for standing still, when she was not making the most beautiful movements. Irving insisted on this, because he was very slow and she was very swift.”

Eileen Atkins later gave an interview in which she said her parents wanted her to be a dancer. “But at 12 I began to find it very offensive to be tap dancing in front of men in nightclubs.”
Paddy does it again.

Paddy O’Keeffe performed his one-man show about Bernard Shaw again in Brighton in May. **Bernard Shaw invites YOU** was described as a “gripping performance” by *The Argus*, Brighton’s newspaper. “The carefully selected and emotionally-charged tales take you through Shaw’s life from his unconventional upbringing to his even more unconventional marriage,” they said.

Last year Paddy O’Keeffe’s one-man show *(above)* was an Argus Angel award-winner. Since then, he has taken it to India, where the show was recommended by *Time Out New Delhi* and described by the *Times of India* as “a rare theatrical exploration of the Irish literary icon.”

**Shaw on University Challenge**

There were questions about Bernard Shaw on the TV programme *University Challenge* recently, from *The Applecart, The Devil’s Disciple* and *Man and Superman*.

Q: What Englishman will give his mind to politics as long as he can afford to keep a What? (Student answer: A full cellar?) Correct answer: A motor car.

Q: What is the only way a man can become famous without ability? (Student answer: Through the army?) Correct answer: Through martyrdom.

Q: What form of government substitutes election by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few? (Student answer: Democracy?) Correct answer: Democracy.