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Hon Treasurer and Social Secretary  
Mrs B Paine  
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June 2015

Dear Member

I do hope you are enjoying this bout of better weather that we're having at the moment.

**BERYL PAINE WRITES:** I am writing this before our visit to the Alpaca Farm, so more about that in the next Newsletter.

For our get-together in July, I have booked us on a Thames river boat trip from Westminster to Hampton Court on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> July. The boat sails from Westminster Pier, Victoria Embankment at 11 am and arrives at Hampton Court at approximately 2.30 pm. Snacks and drinks are available on board and upon arrival at Hampton Court you will be able to visit the tea room there.

I suggest we meet at Thames Riverboat kiosk on the Embankment no later than 10.40 am, so that we have time to board and pick our favoured spot to sit. Cost is a subsidised sum of £5 per head. The river trips are always popular so I'm hoping to see many of you there. Please return the attached slip to reach me no later than 4<sup>th</sup> July, as I have to 'phone final numbers through.

As you know, we're already booked for "Sinatra" at the Palladium in September and I was planning to book for "Gypsy" in October for which Imelda Staunton has received rave notices. However, there are no concessions and the cheapest group price I can get is £39.50 per head. Please let me know if you would be prepared to pay this or is there another show you would like to see.

**Beryl**

**BERYL RYAN WRITES:** **Visit to the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Wednesday 13th May 2015:** This was such an interesting and brilliant tour, taking in every aspect of this wonderful, awe-inspiring building. We had the services of a guide who really knew everything about the Royal Opera House. The tour lasted about 1 hour 15 minutes and our guide began by giving us a brief history of the building which was built in 1858 after the previous building was burned down, and the theatre became the Royal Opera House in 1892. Apparently, the building was used as a dance hall during the 2nd World War and in 1946 the ROH reopened. Thanks to funds from Arts Lottery and private fundraising a major reconstruction of the building took place in 1997 which involved demolition of almost the whole site and some adjacent buildings. From watching a video, it was very interesting to learn that there exists in Thurrock, Essex a very important part of the Royal Opera House where sets are built and where there is also a training centre for creative and cultural skills etc. There are also tours available on this site.

In the costumes section there were magnificent golden costumes on display. We were also able to watch principle dancers and cast members rehearsing in the mirror-lined practise studios. We were extremely

fortunate, on this occasion, to be shown inside the auditorium during a break in rehearsals, which apparently is a rare opportunity. Its horseshoe-shape with its plush red seats and red and gold decor is absolutely stunning and with an orchestra pit which can be extended when required.

It is obviously not possible to see every section of the theatre, as tours will vary according to what is going on at that particular time – an excuse perhaps to make a return visit?

After the tour, an extremely satisfied group then made their way to the Kingsway Hall Hotel where we had a very nice afternoon tea served in very pleasant surroundings and by very willing and agreeable staff. A really great day out – thank you Beryl for making all the arrangements.

**Beryl**

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Sheila Fenn', written in black ink on a light-colored background.

**Sheila Fenn**  
**Hon Secretary**