
OBITUARY

BARBARA CAVANAGH (1939–2025)

Barbara was an antiquarian theatrical bookseller, researcher and dealer specialising in 19th-century theatre, including pre- and early cinema. She sold magic lantern material, including at stalls in the Magic Circle HQ.

Born in Mumbles, South Wales, Barbara worked in London from 1958 for Ifan Kyrle Fletcher, the theatrical bookseller and historian, who set up the Society for Theatre Research.

She met and married a customer, John Cavanagh, and together they set up their bookselling business, Motley Books Limited. They established an extraordinary private library, gathering stock from across the continent. With their two daughters they lived at the National Trust property, Mottisfont Abbey in Hampshire, from 1972 to 1993, needing considerable space to house the library and business. Amongst other acquisitions, Barbara catalogued a collection of Sergei Diaghilev's costume designs and later dealt in ephemera.

Barbara moved to Hastings in 2012 and until the last months of her life was still dealing, selling the very rare *La Perouse* prompt book to the Garrick Club shortly before her death.

For her 80th birthday, Barbara took friends to the Kent Museum of the Moving Image, run by her friends David Francis and Joss Marsh, and were treated to a magic lantern show.

Olivia Cavanagh

