

1661-1663

# NEW THEATRE ROYAL OPENS IN DRURY LANE

## Red Bull Back -but future looks bleak

1661: The Red Bull Theatre in Clerkenwell has re-opened, having survived the wholesale destruction of theatre buildings under the Puritans. The Red Bull escaped demolition because it suffered a run of poor business and had closed before the Civil War broke out. Technically it was no longer a working theatre, and thus escaped demolition.

Originally used by the Queen's Men and then catering for a very vulgar type of audience, it was used as warehouse during the Commonwealth period, and - according to rumour - was occasionally used for a secret and illegal play performance.

However, its future is very much in doubt. Samuel Pepys has reported that "All's Lost by Lust" attracted eleven customers in the pit, and not more than 100 in the whole house. The performance was very poorly done, he says.

## Fortune Demolished

1661: Dismantled by the Puritans in 1648, the Fortune Theatre in Cripplegate has finally been demolished. It was originally built by Philip Henslowe in the hope of stealing business away from the Globe, and was similar in size and structure to its rival. It was rebuilt in brick following a fire in 1621.

As an indication of the size of the theatre, the site has been cleared and will be re-developed into a street containing twenty-three houses each with its own small garden. One wall of the original theatre remains, and that will be incorporated into a factory that will also be contained on the site.

## Red Bull Gives Up

1663: According to D'Avenant's "A Theatre To Let", the resident company at the Red Bull Theatre consists entirely of spiders.



Thomas Killigrew (now 50 years old) painted in 1623 by the Court painter, Anthony Van Dyck. (Detail)

Trustees of the Weston Park Foundation/Bridgeman Art Library, London

1663:, 7th May: Thomas Killigrew's new theatre in Drury Lane measures 112feet by 59feet, and has cost £2,400 to build. Performances are given in the afternoons, and the admission prices are Pit 2/6d, Balcony 1/6d, Upper Gallery 1/-, Boxes 4/-. The leading actors are Michael Mohun and Charles Hart, and the company includes John Lacey, a famous Falstaff. The theatre is in Bridges Street, Covent Garden, and is reached via Drury Lane. The opening performance is a revival of Beaumont and Fletcher's "The Humorous Lieutenant".

## "Orange Moll" Wins Dublin's Smock Alley Sales Concession Theatre Opens

1663: Mrs Mary Megs, known as "Orange Moll", has obtained the concession to sell "oranges, fruits and sweetmeats" at the new Theatre Royal in Drury Lane. She has paid £100 down, and will pay 6/8d per day as rent. She is not allowed to sell fruit to occupants of the upper gallery for fear it will be thrown at the actors. Mrs Megs will employ "orange girls" to sell the wares. The price of an orange is 6d, but patrons are expected to tip. The concession has been granted for a period of 39 years.

1662: The City of Dublin has lost no time in acquiring a theatre for itself. Its first theatre, in Werburgh Street, was only five years old when it was closed under the Commonwealth. Dublin's new theatre is on the junction of Smock Alley and Orange Street.

**Theatres opened 1661 - 1663**  
Dublin - Smock Alley Theatre  
London - Drury Lane, Red Bull Theatre

**Closed 1661 - 1663**  
London - Red Bull Theatre