

## Two worlds meet through letters

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**The true story of an enchanting 20-year relationship forged through a love of literature is brought to life by Shinfield Players this month.**



84 Charing Cross Road is based on the letters exchanged between aspiring playwright Helen Hanff, a smart, wise-cracking, noisy, belligerent New Yorker, and Frank Doel, the quiet, unassuming manager of Marks bookshop, formerly of the eponymous address.

Hanff first wrote to the shop in 1949, seeking out-of-print titles, and continued a 20-year correspondence with Doel. When she finally compiled their letters in a book, she was in her fifties and at a low ebb, all her scripts and plays having been rejected. One rejection slip arrived in the same post which told her Doel was dead.

In 1971 the book was published, captivating readers, followed by a successful film, starring Anne Bancroft in Helene Hanff's character and Anthony Hopkins as Frank Doel. By the time Hanff arrived in London to publicise her book, the shop had closed. She climbed its stairs and looked at the empty shelves and said out loud, "Frank, I finally made it." She hoped he heard, she said later.

**James Roose-Evans' adaptation of Hanff's book, which offers a fascinating insight into two very different worlds over two very different decades - is at Shinfield Players Theatre, Whitley Wood Lane, from Wednesday (June 11) until Saturday (14). Tickets are £7.**