

## JEAN SIMMONDS (A star on holiday in Sandown)

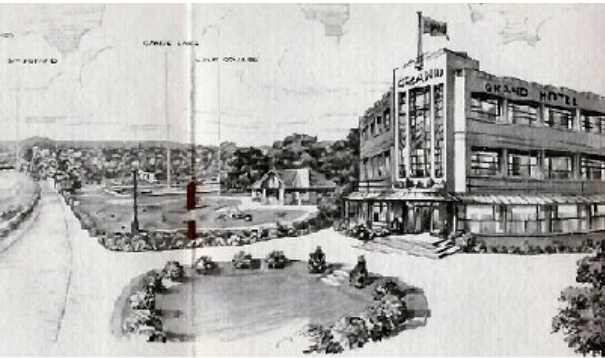
By Dave Bambrough



Jean Simmonds died on January 22<sup>nd</sup> 2010 aged 80 years. She had an illustrious acting career, debuting in the British production “Give us the Moon” in 1944. By 1947 at the tender age of 18 she had appeared in seven major films.

Not intending to take a holiday that year, a friend in the film studio highlighted a vacancy at the Grand Hotel, Sandown, on the Isle of Wight. Without hesitation she promptly booked a fortnights’ stay for the last two weeks in August.

Throughout the fortnight she took part in all activities organised by the hotel, swam, sunbathed and was seen riding horseback around the local countryside. Whilst shopping in the town she was recognised several times and on one occasion whilst playing on the pin ball machines in the White City Amusement Arcade, she had to beat a hasty retreat in order to dodge a number of autograph hunters. Several young men telephoned her during her stay at the hotel in the hopes of making a “date” in order to obtain her autograph.



The proprietor of the hotel Mrs E. Peach said, “Jean was one of the nicest and most unassuming guests she had had the pleasure of entertaining. She had sought no special treatment and if every visitor was as understanding, the life of a hotelier in these difficult days would be much easier”.

On leaving the Island to return to her home in Golders Green, her first commitment was to put the finishing touches to “Hamlet” in which she was starring opposite Lawrence Olivier.

Her next scheduled film was a re-make of the 1923 film, The Blue Lagoon. Her hopes were, that this would involve a trip to the Fiji Islands, but Arthur Rank were having difficulty finding a suitable man to play opposite her. Whilst here she had been looking for a man about 20 years of age, with a reasonable torso, blonde hair and able to swim, but unfortunately had not found anyone to fit the bill.

This name, “The Blue Lagoon” had been adopted by Sandown Canoe Lake on its opening, and later by the Sandown Swimming Pool, some time after its opening in 1934.

Although stating she hoped to return to the Island in the future it was never to be, as three year later she left our shores for a career in Hollywood. She died in Santa Monica California.