

**Southport Dramatic Club**

presents

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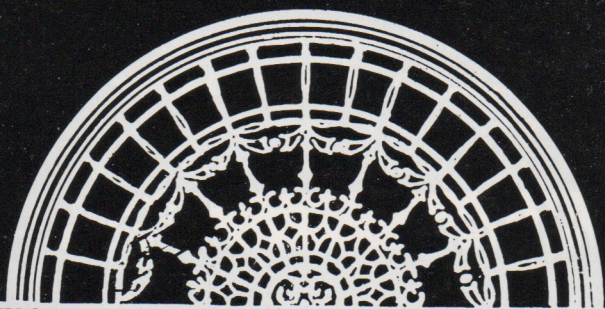
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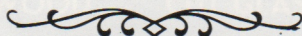
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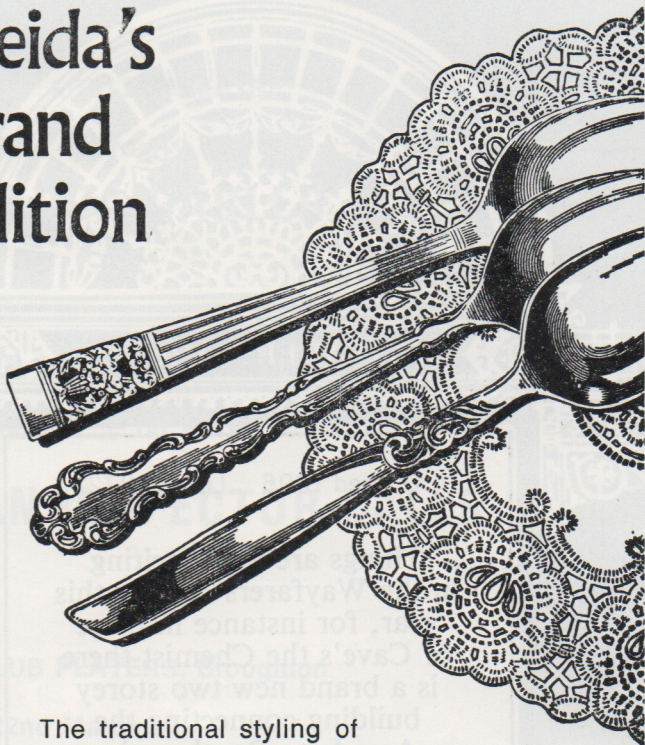


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Directed by Sheila Pook

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25th to 29th March

**PATIENCE**

by Gilbert and Sullivan

Produced by Audrey Eccles

A Houghton Players Production

18th to 26th April

**THE ODD COUPLE**

by Neil Simon

Directed by Thelma Falls-Hand

An S.D.C. Production

30th April to 3rd May

**A GARRICK PLAYERS PRODUCTION**

16th to 24th May

**A PENNY FOR A SONG**

by John Whiting

Directed by Don Anderson

An S.D.C. Production

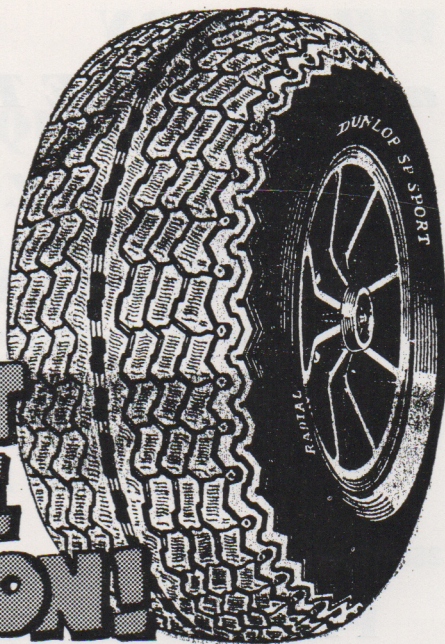


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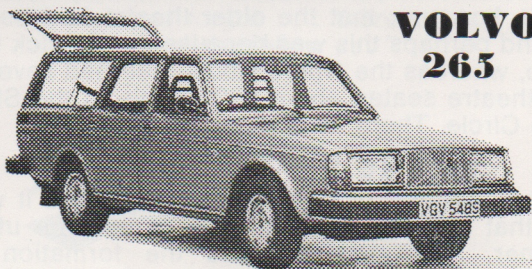
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# THEATRE IN

## PART IV—THE GARRICK THEATRE

In 1929, shortly before Christmas, the old Opera House was burned down. It was over two years before the foundation stone for a new theatre on the same site was laid on February 25th, 1932.

A newspaper report of the day had this to say: "Mr. Matcham's Opera House, opened in 1891, was in its day one of the most comfortable and pleasant of provincial theatres, but the many changes that take place in men and manners during a period of 40 years had left it, if not exactly out-of-date, at any rate somewhat behind the most modern standards of theatre design and its disappearance has left the way open for the building of a thoroughly up-to-date modern theatre, which we have every reason to believe will before long take its place in the affections of Southport theatre-goers as firmly as did the old Opera House."

### The Building

Designed by the architect, George Tonge, the new theatre was said by the *Visiter* to vie "in its artistic splendour with the best in London and continental capitals." The main building, which, of course, still stands, was of rustic brick and reconstructed stone. There was a 'spacious and comfortable' entrance hall with a domed ceiling, marble floor and niches for statuary. Its decoration was in the Egyptian style, black glass striped with silver and the hall was illuminated by concealed lighting. Broad, thickly carpeted stairways led to the auditorium.

The auditorium seated 1,600, not so very many more than the Opera House, which had seated nearly 1,500. Many people felt, however, that the older theatre had been more intimate and perhaps this was because the Garrick had only one Circle, whereas the Opera House had had several tiers. The new theatre seated about 900 people in the Stalls and 700 in the Circle. There were also four boxes.

Refreshments were provided in two Foyers and it was also intended that an open-air colonnade should be utilized in the summer. An innovation was the formation of the Garrick Club with a private room at the theatre which members could patronize during the day as well as in the evening.



# SOUTHPORT

The stage was at that time one of the largest in the provinces and was equipped with the latest devices in lighting, scene-shifting, etc. There were 30 dressing rooms (the star room being provided with its own drawing room), bathrooms supplied with every modern convenience, wardrobes and offices for visiting as well as permanent staff. Full-length mirrors were placed at every landing so that artistes could check their appearance before going on stage.

## **The Opening Night**

The Garrick Theatre opened on December 19th, 1932 (the eve of the third anniversary of the fire at the Opera House) with a production of 'Firebird', an adaptation by Jeffrey Dell of a Hungarian play. (One wonders if the irony of the title was noticed at the time.) The play, which was described in contemporary reviews as "a Hungarian 'Hindle Wakes'," starred Gladys Cooper and was much praised.

At the celebrations after the play, Mr. George Rose, the Chairman of the Southport Theatre Company, which had built the theatre, was praised for his altruism in laying out £120,000 (the Opera House had cost £20,000) in a venture that was unlikely to be financially rewarding. Mr. Rose replied that his reward lay in beholding the "new and magnificent theatre (that) had risen out of the ashes of the old Opera House."

The Southport Guardian gave an enthusiastic report of the occasion on December 21st:

"No theatre could have had a finer appearance than the Garrick had on the night of its opening, and everyone seemed delighted with its magnificent appearance and the perfection of the arrangements made by the manager and his staff, the comfort of the seats and the facility with which they were reached giving the greatest satisfaction to all concerned."

## **The Subsequent Years**

The aims of the theatre were laid down in the brochure produced at its opening, The theatre "wished to revive in Southport the interest of its citizens in drama and to make the Theatre a centre of dramatic interest. It is its intention to produce the best plays possible, to establish an annual dramatic festival, and to offer to its patrons such facilities as have never before been offered in any other Theatre."



## *THEATRE IN SOUTHPORT*

### **The Subsequent Years** (continued)

After 'Firebird', it was intended to produce 'Maid of the Mountains' and future attractions included 'Bitter Sweet', 'White Horse Inn', solo performances by Ruth Draper and, especially for Grand National week, 'The Belle of New York.'

In 1934 the Garrick was taken over by a newly formed company, The Garrick Theatre, Southport Ltd., which was closely associated with Metropolitan and Provincial Cinematograph Theatres Ltd., who controlled many theatres and cinemas. The new General Manager said that he hoped to implement a policy of lower prices and to attract some London productions now that the theatrical world was beginning to recover from the effects of the Depression.

An important occasion in the life of the Garrick came two years later when Robert Donat starred in the premier of 'Red Night', a play about the First World War by James Lansdale Hodson, produced by Miles Malleson, which later transferred, with little success, to the Queen's, London.

Only three months later a correspondent in the Visiter discussed the failure of the Southport public to support its theatre, a recurrent theme in the theatrical history of this town. Nevertheless, the Garrick was kept open, supplying plays, opera and variety shows for those who would come.

It was visited by George Formby, Elsie and Doris Waters, Sybil Thorndyke and Lewis Casson, the Markova Dolin Ballet and Vera Lynn, amongst others, and was also hired by such amateur groups as the Southport Orpheus Society, the Operatic Society and the Southport Dramatic Club. A glance at the programmes shows that by 1950 the staple diet of the theatre was of variety shows and musical entertainments featuring well known orchestras, such as Henry Hall's.

During the 1950's the management capitulated to popular taste and started showing films, until some time in that decade, the Garrick Theatre became the Essoldo Cinema. A few years later it was the turn of the cinema to go into decline and, early in the Sixties, the Essoldo became a bingo hall, in which guise it still stands.

Fortunately, the demise of the Garrick did not entail the complete absence of live theatre from Southport, as my next article will attempt to show.

V.P.



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1st to 9th February, 1980

# Children's Day

by **Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall**

Directed by **Robin Hirsch**

## CHARACTERS

Robin Partridge, a Publisher	... ..	<b>Gerald Catterall</b>
Emma Partridge, his wife	... ..	<b>Jean Braithwaite</b>
Peter Butler, a Restaurateur	... ..	<b>Michael Yates</b>
Polly Butler, his wife	... ..	<b>Ann Catterall</b>
Tom Sutton, Emma's Solicitor	... ..	<b>Michael Hards</b>
Mavis Pawson, Emma's Mother's help	...	<b>Jan James</b>
Sophie Lovelady, a Chelsea Girl	...	<b>Valerie Whiteside</b>
The Rabbit	... ..	<b>Smokey Joe Whiteside</b>

The action passes in the kitchen of  
Emma's house in Hampstead

## ACT I

An afternoon in late autumn

**Interval** (approximately 20 minutes)

## ACT II

Scene 1 — Immediately following

Scene 2 — About an hour later

Time — the present



## STAGE STAFF

Stage Manager ... .. Ian Yates

Assistant Stage Manager (Book) ... .. Judy Hall

Assistant Stage Managers (Cast) ... .. Karen Reid  
Mark Braithwaite

Properties ... .. Judith Heaton, Christine Genower  
Janine Grime

Wardrobe ... .. Maria D'Alessandro, Thelma Lowe,  
Barbara Preston, Ann Sykes

Lights ... .. Alan Lilley

Sound ... .. Roger Thwaites

Children's voices by kind permission of parents who are  
S.D.C. members

The set constructed and painted by **ROY BLATCHFORD** and  
built by the **PRODUCTION TEAM**



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# SIXTY YEARS ON

As most regular patrons know by now, the Southport Dramatic Club celebrates its 60th anniversary in 1980, having been founded in 1920 by Elsie Leivesley. Many wonderful things have happened to the Club in that period and a few bad ones, the worst being a fire that nearly destroyed the building six years ago.

The fire destroyed most of the understage dressing-room area and costumes for a play which was in the final stages of rehearsal. Had it not been for some inquisitive members (or you might say just plain nosy), who decided, at midnight, to see if anything had been salvaged and found that the fire had re-started, the theatre would certainly have burnt down. After that the firemen stayed the night!

The Little Theatre itself opened its doors on 30th September, 1937 and has stayed open, even during the war when the Sheffield Repertory Company took over the theatre. Before that date the Club performed in many venues all over Southport including, The Opera House, The Pier Pavillion, The Garrick Theatre and our own small premises in Mornington Road.

Some years ago the Club purchased a house in Wright Street which now houses our very large Wardrobe Department. Over the last few years a substantial hiring business has been built-up, but unfortunately due to problems before Christmas, the hiring of costumes has ceased for the time being. While closed, our hard-working wardrobe team have decided to move the costumes available for hire into another area, so that it will be more convenient and easier for you to find the costume you want. So please look, in the coming weeks, for the announcement which will inform you of the grand re-opening of our re-organised Wardrobe Hiring Department.

Another recent venture was the opening of the Foyer Bar just over a year ago. This is proving extremely successful and popular with most patrons and is part of our next major building project, that of a new theatre bar and clubroom in what is now the Car Park. This is commonly called Phase 3 among members of the Club, (Phase 1 — the complete re-wiring of the theatre, Phase 2 — new dressing room facilities understage) and is at the final planning stage, with building work to start very shortly. So, if you hear anyone talking about Phases 1, 2 or 3, you will know what they mean. Phase 4 has not yet been decided!

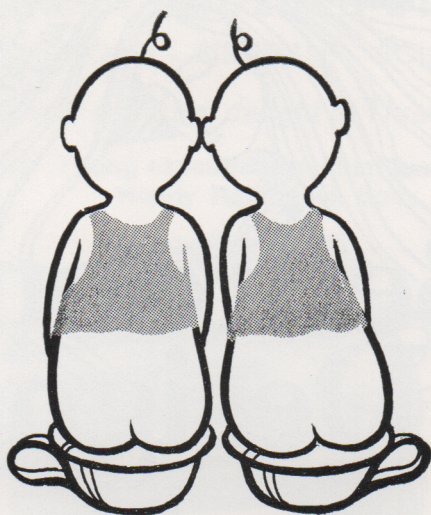
Our main Diamond Jubilee celebration is being centred around a Champagne Gala Night to be held at the Little Theatre on Thursday, 15th May and should be a very 'diamond studded' occasion judging by our last Gala Nights. The first time the Club organised an event like this was in May, 1977 for the Queen's Silver Jubilee and at the end of a very successful evening, a cheque for £1,600 was handed over to the Silver Jubilee Fund. The second was in September, 1978 to mark the opening of our new season — again a great success. Please come and join us on this evening and help make our celebrations complete. Hopefully, more events will take place during the year and we will certainly keep you up-to-date with all the arrangements.

It is very appropriate that the Southport Dramatic Club is experiencing its most successful season for many years, (attendances so far well over 90%) and this has only been achieved by the superb support of all our subscribers, patrons and friends. Our grateful thanks to you all — long may you continue to do so.

C. H.



## *"I found out about Sarah"*



“ . . . The way her mummy talks, you'd think she was in Who's Who. Well! I found out what's what with her. Her daddy own a bank? Sweetie, not even a bank account. That Silver Shadow pram? Darling, that's horse power not earning power. Of course she does dress divinely. But really . . . a Belgian Lace christening robe and all those dresses, not to mention the polished maple 'Cosatto' cot . . . on her daddy's income? Well darling, I found out about that too. I just happened to see Sarah and her mummy coming out of Harrisons, would you believe? So, in I go . . . and was I surprised? . . . they've got everything . . . simply everything any girl could ever wish for. I can tell you honey, from now on it's first stop Harrisons for me everytime. Oh! I almost forgot . . . there's this rather dishy fellow . . . ”

# *Harrisons*

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# 'Little' Bits and Pieces

With a very successful pantomime behind us (a 100% audience capacity can be reported), it is now time to look to the rest of the season. You should be able to find our posters and hand-outs all over town, but in case you have missed them, the colour to look for is blue. In fact, why not pick-up one of our hand-outs from Box Office on your way out, then you will have all the details of the plays being performed by the S.D.C. until the end of the season.

The main social event this month is our Annual Dinner Dance being held at the Prince of Wales Hotel on Fr.day, 22nd February, 1980. The full details are as follows:

**FRIDAY, 22nd FEBRUARY, 1980**

at the

**PRINCE OF WALES HOTEL, LORD STREET, SOUTHPORT**

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This being our Diamond Jubilee year it would be pleasant to see more theatre-goers attending than we have had before. If you would like tickets, please contact Mrs. Pam Hards (Chairman of the Social Committee) on Southport 77608 evenings only.

You might have noticed, printed on the front cover of our programme are the words: 'Member of the Little Theatre Guild of Great Britain.' This is an organisation which keeps the various Little Theatres like ourselves in touch with each other. Everyone appoints a Little Theatre Guild representative who attends conferences at other theatres all over the country, which are held every three months. The Southport Dramatic Club hosted the 99th conference in June, 1978. Also regular social visits to local theatres featured on our 'What's on at other Little Theatres' page are made, plus many one-day and weekend courses on such topics as: Make-up, Costume Design, Acting and Staging are arranged. Thus helping in the general exchange of views and ideas among members of the Guild. Our current Little Theatre representative is Mike Rogerson, one of our F.O.H. column writers and a regular contributor to the programme, who, together with his wife Norma, arranges all our theatre visits, conference and course attendances. Why not think about becoming a member of the Southport Dramatic Club as this is yet another activity in which you could get involved.

Our thanks to Bill Tidy for drawing and judging our recent children's colouring competition, the winners of which were given in our F.O.H. column of the Southport Visitor on Saturday, 26th January and are displayed on the Notice Board in the Foyer.

A FINAL PLEA — WOULD SOMEONE WRITE TO US WITH ANY COMMENTS YOU MAY HAVE ABOUT ANY ASPECT OF THE THEATRE. THE ADDRESS TO WRITE TO IS: 'Little' Bits and Pieces, The Little Theatre, Hoghton Street, Southport. SO FAR NO ONE HAS DONE SO AND WE ARE FEELING VERY NEGLECTED.

C.H.



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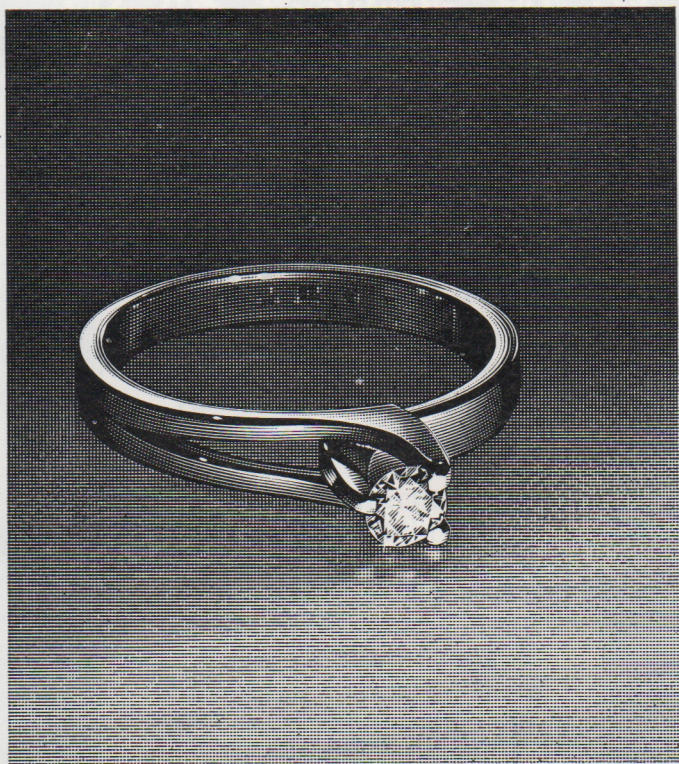
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18th—23rd February

**HEDDA GABLER**

by Henrik Ibsen

**BOLTON LITTLE THEATRE**

25th February — 1st March

**AN INSPECTOR CALLS**

by J. B. Priestley

**THE CLUB PLAYERS, Broughton**

20th—22nd March

**ANGELS IN LOVE**

by Hugh Mills

**STOCKPORT GARRICK THEATRE**

8th—15th March

**HENRY V**

by William Shakespeare

**WIGAN LITTLE THEATRE**

7th—15th March

**WHEN WE ARE MARRIED**

by J. B. Priestley



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