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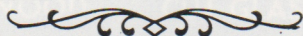
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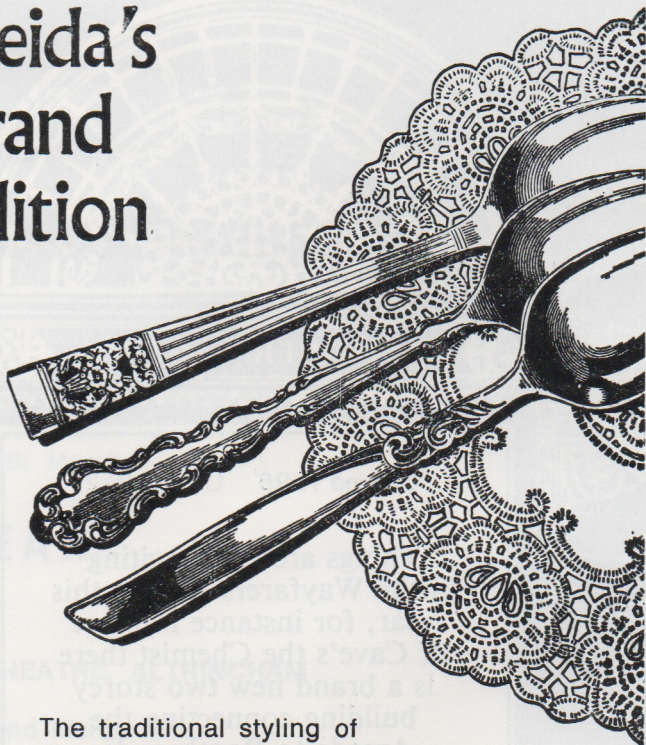
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by Edward Percy and Reginald Denham
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by John Whiting
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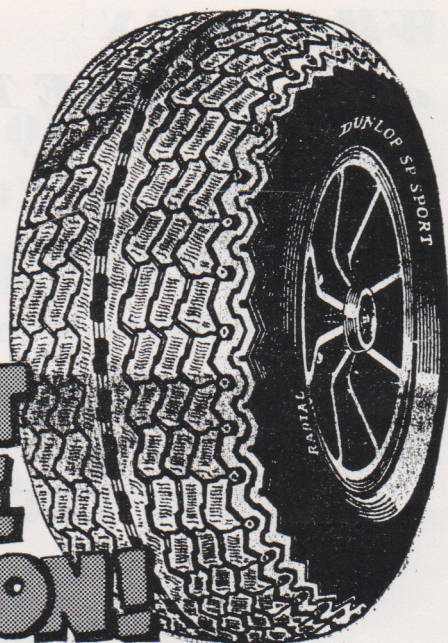
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The Archer-Shees

Confidential

Admiralty

17th October 1908

Sir,

I am commanded by my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to inform you that they have received a letter from the Commanding Officer of the Royal Naval College at Osborne reporting the theft of a postal order at the College on the 7th instant which was afterwards cashed at the Post Office.

Investigation of the circumstances of the case leaves no other conclusion possible than that the postal order was taken by your son, Cadet George Archer-Shee.

My Lords deeply regret that they must therefore request you to withdraw your son from the College.

I am sir,

Your obedient servant,

C. I. Thomas

Bristol

18th October 1908

Sir,

I have received the above 'confidential' letter calling upon me to withdraw my son Cadet George Archer-Shee from the Royal Naval College in disgrace as a thief!

Nothing will make me believe my boy guilty of this charge, which shall be sifted by independent experts.

Your obedient servant,

Martin Archer-Shee

Thus started the famous legal battle that inspired Terence Rattigan to write 'The Winslow Boy.' As the play makes clear, the point at issue was not who stole a 5/- postal order, but the individual's right to fight for justice when faced with the apparently arbitrary decision of a bureaucratic Authority.

Although Rattigan's play follows closely the legal outlines of the case, the personalities and the family details are purely fictional. George Archer-Shee's father was a banker and a firm believer in honesty and integrity, but, because of ill health, it was not he who took up the cudgels on behalf of his son. Instead George's champion was his half-brother, Major Martin Archer-Shee. Their father had been twice married. His first wife, an American, had borne him one son and two daughters, Mary and Winifrede. After her death he had remarried and his second wife had given birth to George and an older sister, Anna.

At the time of the case Major Martin was 36, an active, politically involved man, who was well-suited to fight in honour of the family motto, Vincat Veritas—Truth Conquers. His two sisters, incidentally, were by then nuns of the Sacred Heart Order and Anna was still only a teenager, so the 'romantic' interest in the play between Sir Robert and Catherine has no basis in fact.

Against the Admiralty

The lawyer in the real-life case was Sir Edward Carson, an Irishman, who shared Major Martin's political interests. (They were both ardent Unionists).

Carson had earlier been involved in another famous lawsuit. He had defended the Marquess of Queensbury against Oscar Wilde's prosecution for Criminal Libel over the charge of homosexuality. When, however, Queensberry was acquitted, Carson refused to have anything to do with the prosecution of Wilde, feeling that to do so would be vindictive.

By 1908 Carson was one of the country's greatest and best-known lawyers and—something that was of particular importance in this particular case—dedicated lover of justice. Major Martin knew that Carson could be relied upon to fight an apparently trivial case with as much devotion as if he himself had been a member of the family. The question was whether he could be persuaded to take on the case.

Rodney's M. Bennett book (from which the information in this article is drawn) related the story which was passed to him by Major Martin's son. It appears that George was taken to Carson's chambers and there subjected to an interrogation very similar to the one with which Rattigan ends the first act of the play, which convinced him of the boy's innocence.

In the months that followed that initial exchange of letters, the College authorities were unable to persuade the Archer-Shees that justice had been done. The Archer-Shees, in their turn, were unable to persuade the Admiralty to agree to independent arbitration. By February 1909 officialdom had made up its mind and totally refused to discuss the matter any further. The only alternative then left to the family seemed to be to take the matter to court. This, however, was far from easy.

Neither the Director of Public Prosecutions nor the Admiralty would cooperate in a plan to prosecute George in the criminal courts where the evidence could have had a fair hearing. Nor was it possible to sue the Admiralty for wrongful dismissal in the civil courts, since 'The King can do no Wrong' and his servants, in their official capacity, cannot normally be brought to court by another citizen. The solution that Carson finally found was that of 'Petition of Right', an ancient and unusual legal procedure which is the only exception to the rule that the Crown cannot be sued. Under this a case can be brought for breaches of contract only under the theory that the Crown itself gives permission for this to be done.

A petition was accordingly drawn up which maintained that the Admiralty was in breach of an agreement with Mr. Archer-Shee to educate his son for the Royal Navy. It was eventually presented to King Edward VII who endorsed it with the resonant traditional formula authorizing the proceedings: 'Let Right be Done.' By July 1910 both sides were ready to come to court, with the same happy result as in the play. But the case was to cause rumblings in Parliament several months later.

George Archer-Shee completed his education at Stonyhurst and then went to America where he joined the Wall Street firm of Fisk & Robinson. He was still there at the outbreak of the First World War. In 1914 he enlisted as a subaltern and was killed that year during the Battle of Ypres.

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Terence Rattigan

Terence Rattigan was born in London in 1911. He was educated at Harrow and at Trinity College, Oxford, where he read for a degree in Modern History. His parents' plans for him a career in diplomacy were thwarted by his own determination to make a career as a writer—preferably a writer of plays—and he left Oxford without sitting his finals.

From boyhood Rattigan had been an avid playgoer and an incorrigible playwright. One of the earliest efforts, a one-page playlet in French, written whilst still only a junior scholar at Harrow, met with this criticism: "French execrable: theatre sense first class."—and a mark of 2/10! Rattigan himself regarded this comment as significant, feeling that, however different his adult plays might be, they shared a sense of theatre, which he regarded as a prime virtue.

His first play to meet with success in the commercial theatre—and it met with very considerable success—was 'French Without Tears', first performed in 1936. It was not until the later years of the Second World War (during which he served as an air-gunner in the R.A.F.) that he wrote another play of similar importance. 'Flare Path' (1942) was his first serious play, but it was followed by 'While the Sun Shines' (1943), another farce along the lines of 'French Without Tears', which like its predecessor, ran for over 1,000 performances. 'Love in Idleness' (1944) was another comedy put together with great care and craftsmanship and deliberately avoiding the verbal sophistication of, say, Oscar Wilde.

In his next play, 'The Winslow Boy' (1946), Rattigan temporarily abandoned comedy, turning his craftsmanship to the service of a serious theme and meeting with similar success. This play won the Ellen Terry Award for the best play produced on the London stage in 1946 and in 1947 won the New York Critics' Award for the best foreign play produced in New York that year. Thereafter, although he did write further comedies, it was the serious plays that were then and still are considered to be more important. Such pieces as 'The Browning Version', 'The Deep Blue Sea', 'Separate Tables', 'Ross', 'Bequest to the Nation', 'Man and Boy' and 'In Praise of Love' are carefully considered studies of character and social situation, acknowledging Rattigan's allegiance to the well-made play.

To the end of his life he believed that a play must, above all, entertain, that it should be concerned with character and narrative rather than ideas. He was antagonistic to the 'kitchen sink' dramas of Osborne and Wester, which were in critical favour during the latter part of his career, whilst he himself seemed to be out of fashion. During the last decade the tide seems to have turned slightly. There have been revivals in London of 'The Browning Version' and 'The Winslow Boy' and 'French Without Tears' is frequently produced. But only time will tell if his plays have a truly lasting value.

Terence Rattigan received a C.B.E. in 1958 and a knighthood in 1971. He died in 1977.

V.P.

29th February to 8th March, 1980

THE WINSLOW BOY

by **Terence Rattigan**

Directed by **Sheila Pook**

CAST (In order of appearance)

Ronnie Winslow	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Richard Hirsch
Violet	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Joan Moore
Grace Winslow	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Peggy Ince
Arthur Winslow	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Bill Finn
Catherine Winslow	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Lesley Bentley
Dickie Winslow	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Mark Braithwaite
John Watherstone	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Peter Burroughs
Desmond Curry	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Mike Stowell
Miss Barnes	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Glenys Hoofe
Fred	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Peter Beswick
Sir Robert Morton	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Don Anderson

The action of the play takes place in Arthur Winslow's house in Kensington, London and extends over a period of two years preceding the war of 1914-1918.

ACT I

Scene 1 A Sunday morning in July

Scene 2 An evening in April (nine months later)

INTERVAL (approx. 15 minutes)

ACT II

Scene 1 An evening in January (nine months later)

Scene 2 An afternoon in June (five months later)

STAGE STAFF

Stage Manager **John Gosling**

Assistant Stage Manager (Book) **Joyce Crosby**

Asst. Stage Managers (Cast) ... **Ruth Rowe, David Parry**

Properties **Katie Parsons, Jo McCarthy**

Wardrobe **Jayne Barty**
Katherin Parkin, Anne Sykes

Lighting **Colin Grime**

Sound **Kay McCallen, Jeffrey Wright**

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



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Designing does get done!

With the approach of our Jubilee Gala production "A Penny for a Song", we will once again see in the programme a combination of names which have become a familiar and welcome part of recent Southport Dramatic Club seasons. I refer to:

'Directed by Don Anderson

Set designed by David Charters'

We all know of the excellence of Don's productions, but we thought you, our patrons, might like to learn a little of what goes into the set designing process on our very special shows—seen through David's work.

Although principally an actor—with a strong leaning for musical roles—regular theatregoers will remember his two recent creations: Abanazar in "Aladdin" and Colonel Gillweather in "Something's Afoot"—David is a very talented graphic artist.

The first show he designed for Don was "Vivat, Vivat Regina" and this happened almost by accident. Apparently, Don was stuck for an idea for the setting, David scribbled out an idea on the back of an envelope—it worked. However, the good luck did not end there, David made a scale model and took it to John Haynes, our Chairman of Productions. John had been in the process of making a scale model of the Little Theatre stage and surprise, surprise the set model was to the same scale and fitted perfectly on it.

Since then the designing process for this type of show has settled down to a regular pattern. The director will lay out what acting areas he needs in terms of space and location and will give his ideas on what different height levels are required.

The designer will then rough out a drawing of the proposed setting and once this is approved by the director, he will make a scale model. The model will then be discussed thoroughly with the productions team to check out how practical it is. This stage is most important for a model designed from an actor's, director's or even an experienced designer's point of view may not necessarily work in practice. Will it light satisfactorily, could it be made from stock materials or will we have to buy extensively, how difficult will it be to 'work' from a stage management point of view during the show.

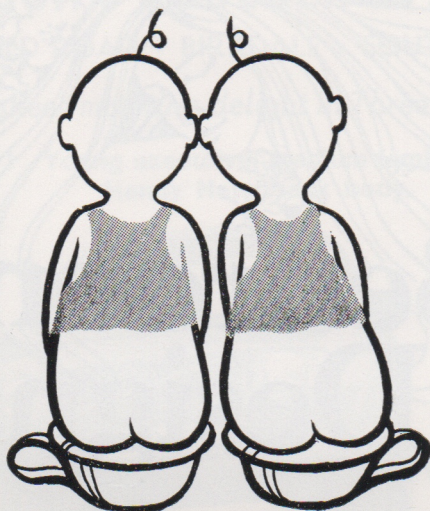
Our technical experts under John have these and a host of other questions before the model is finally trimmed, possibly rebuilt and the component parts broken down into plans ready for set construction to start.

There appear to be several cardinal rules for designing what David calls the "fifth character in a four hander". The setting should complement the play and performances but not dominate them, it should work well, present the actors in the best way and it should give an immediate feel for the atmosphere and character of the piece as soon as the curtain rises.

So, when the tabs fly up on "A Penny for a Song" revealing a beautiful old English Georgian style garden—just think of the many hours of work that go into a stage setting before even a hammer or paint brush is raised in anger!

M. R.

"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 . . . "

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'Little' Bits and Pieces

I am pleased to say a patron has kindly taken pity on us and finally written to the 'Little' Bits and Pieces page with some comments and I hope that during the run of the play they are in the audience so that they can see the reply.

To deal with the points in order:

- (a) More information about forthcoming plays—the best way of finding out whether any particular play would be of interest is to read our regular weekly column in the Saturday edition of the Southport Visitor. Usually printed on the Arts page, but can easily be found as the S.D.C. logo (as on the front of the programme) is used and the article ends with F.O.H. (which means Front of House, just in case anyone wondered). These weekly articles give more details of the plays and events as we try to keep everyone informed of what is happening.
- (b) Ice Creams—just before each play opens, enough Ice Creams are purchased to fill the refrigerator. Sometimes all the Ices are sold before the run ends. The supplier will only deliver large quantities, (i.e. enough to fill the refrigerator) as we do not place what they regard as regular orders. So, in the interests of freshness and to prevent the Ice Creams being a month old before you eat them, if all are sold by the Thursday or Friday of the second week, no more are ordered until the next play.
- (c) Box Office opening times — I am sorry you have experienced difficulty in booking your seats by telephone, but the times are printed on our large and small posters (which are currently blue) in the bottom right hand corner. Just to make sure, the Box Office opens from the Monday before the opening: 11.00 am to 5.00 pm and during the run of the show: 11.00 am to 8.00 pm. The only exception to these times is usually the Pantomime. So, for "The Winslow Boy" the exact dates and times the Box Office opened were; Monday, 25th February to Thursday, 28th February 11.00 am to 5.00 pm and Friday, 29th February (opening night) to Saturday, 8th March 11.00 am to 8.00 pm. With this information you should have no more problems.

Many thanks to our solitary correspondent, I hope the matters have been dealt with to your satisfaction. To anyone else, if you have any questions, problems, queries, praises, etc., we would certainly be delighted to hear from you.

A warm welcome to our four new First Nighters and fourteen Subscribers to the second half of the season, we hope that you, together with all our regular patrons will enjoy the remaining plays of our Diamond Jubilee Year and join us for the whole season next time.

Finally, a mention for our One-Act plays, which are being performed on Sunday, 16th March, 1980 at 8.00 pm. This time three plays are being performed: scenes from "Ladies in Retirement" by Edward Percy and Reginald Denham, directed by Vera Burns, "After Magritte" by Tom Stoppard, directed by John Evans and "Point of View" by David Campton directed by Betty Kent. These evenings are a mixture of old and new members who are given the opportunity to try something different or appear on the 'Little' stage for the first time. All you have to do is pay 40p at the door, so why not come along, have a drink and enjoy a relaxed social evening.

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