

# TOAD IN LITTLE WOOD

The brave band of thespians battled valiantly against unkind nature in Little Wood. It rained, and the ground was muddy; it blew, and the handsome trees rustled their leaves but, in the end, it was not nature which defeated them but man-made noise from road and sky. The untrained human voice can no longer compete with the kind of roar that now comes from Falloden Way.

Perhaps it is time for the people who decide what plays shall be done in the wood to look at the problem anew.

Something with more spectacle and less words; with movement, dance or mime; maybe even specially written, a pageant!

These thoughts filled my mind during the Saturday matinee (the last, when it didn't rain) of *Toad of Toad Hall*, a wordy, dull play whose success has always surprised me. The first disappointment with this production, since it was presumably aimed at the younger generation,

was that none of the characters displayed any animal characteristics. All right, one need not have masks but there are other ways with movement, dress and make-up of suggesting Mole, Rat, Badger and Toad. Indeed in that list Toad was the odd one out since he did have some barely discernible green and yellow on his face and occasionally hopped into the air. The weasels, stoats and ferrets were dramatically the most successful and there was an exciting and tense moment when first Toad and then Mole were lost in the wood. The Chief Weasel (Simon Ramsey) was very sinister, and audible, which in the long and wordy first half the others on the whole were not. The exceptions were Colin Gregory, a very Welsh Mr Badger and Roberta Smith's pert Ratty (why was she later addressed as Mrs Rat, when she was dressed up as a boy?). There were a lot of children at the interval who hardly knew what

was going on. There was very little rapport with audience. This could have been improved if the director, Marion Greenwood, had moved the acting area further forward — neither the actors or the play needed all that space. John Wilson Goddard made an excellent judge and there was good support from Grania King (Washer woman), Louise Rolfe (Phoebe) and Patrice Sheldon (Bargewoman). Ben Albu's youthful Toad was also more at ease in the latter half of the play. He was, alas, rather inaudible for a lot of the time having acquired a bad habit of dropping his voice at the end of a sentence. The scene in which he hoodwinks Ratty and makes his escape did not come across at all. However, there were some nice touches and a certain panache. The scenery was designed by Fiona Riem was delightful — colourful and witty with some lovely "creepy" trees and a splendid river.

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## 1985 RA SUBS

I have been asked to explain the reason for the delay in returning receipted Membership Cards which were sent in the FREEPOST envelopes.

The card asked that subscriptions should be returned by April 5, so that it wasn't until the following weekend that the envelopes were started to be sorted into their different wards and the cards receipted.

Some 1,500 cards came through the Freepost, a large task for one person. The donations for Fellowship and the subs. for the RA have to be tabulated, totalled, recorded and tallied. This task wasn't completed until mid-May when the receipted cards were passed over to the Chief Wardens, who distributed them to the individual wardens, who in their turn gave them to the members.

All this sounds most complicated, not so complicated as time consuming. At this point we would like to express our thanks to all those members who responded by using the Freepost envelopes — Thank you.

AL  
Chairman  
Wardens and Membership

## SAY GOODNIGHT TO GRANDMA

Colin Welland's humorous, and occasionally painful, study of the power struggle between two women betrays its T.V. origins. The somewhat clumsy device in the first act of dividing the stage into two households (one in London the other in the North) caused a certain amount of puzzlement in the audience. The designer, Simon Ramsey, might have helped here by emphasizing the contrast between the two homes more strongly by the use of colour. However, he is to be complimented on making the best use of such a small stage.

When the curtain rises we see pretty Jean Weston preparing to visit her mother-in-law in order to show-off the first grandchild. She and Tony seem a happy, loving pair although there are already signs of trouble ahead. Jean swears that she will never become like his mother, Nana, whom we now see, in her half of the stage, telephoning her friends and gossiping about the expected visit. Nana has also arranged a surprise party for Tony and has invited his old sporting mates for the evening. She is a widow and yearns for the good old days when her

son and his pals boozed in her kitchen and made much of her. The relationships between them all and the means by which Jean wins but also loses makes an entertaining second act.

Diana Bromley's portrayal of Nana must have made quite a number of wives in the audience stir uneasily — it was a clever study of possessive love but managing to retain some sympathy at the end. The change of attitude in Tony's wife Jean was also clearly charted by Paula Morris, and there was a nice little cameo by Sonia Woolf as Jean's mother. Philip Grant had the difficult task of making Tony interesting, overshadowed as he was by these powerful women. However the moment where the play really springs into life is with the arrival of Tony's five mates. These characters are, one feels, really loved by the playwright and his dialogue here has the ring of truth. Andrew Warshaw, William Critchley, Peter-John White, David Rance and Jav Punwar were all excellent in their portrayals of these hen-pecked, adolescent men.

An entertaining and lively production well directed by Robert Jayes. LS

## PIANO LESSONS CAN BE FUN

Parents who would like their children to study the piano seriously (this does not mean there is no fun in it too!) as well as to learn to appreciate music through its history, concert going etc., may be interested to know that Anoushka Banziger offers such tuition. Mrs Banziger (PSM Warsaw, ARCM Manchester), studied in Warsaw

and then in Manchester under Professor R. Bakst who himself was a pupil of the great Henry Neuhaus (pedagogue and author of "The Art of piano playing"). Mrs Banziger's approach to teaching follows the traditions of the Russian and Polish school. For more information ring 458 5697.



Alan Robinic, Paolo Roncarati and Nicholas Falk the evil wild wooders.



Jenny Broski and Rachel Samuel pretty little rabbits.



# Are your hedges suffering?

Throughout the Suburb there are many signs of dieback and bare leafless patches in hedges which could be the result of the killer disease called Honey Fungus. Most people appreciate the importance of hedges and it is therefore important to be able to identify the symptoms and more important to eradicate the disease before it spreads and destroys complete sections of hedging together with adjacent plants.

Honey Fungus is a soil-borne parasite which may attack almost any type of plant including bulbs, vegetables, and herbaceous plants although it is more common in trees and shrubs. Susceptible species include:

Privet, Rhododendron, Roses, Cherry, Virburnum, Cotoneaster, Willow, Lilac and most fruit trees.

More resistant species include:

Beech, Clematis, Acacia, Holly, Honeysuckle, Ivy, Lime, Yew, Oak, Elder, Laurel and Box.

### FIRST SIGNS

usually the first sign of Honey Fungus is a bare patch within a hedge or some dieback in a tree or shrub; this may occur in as little time as two to three weeks or slowly over one or two years, it is therefore important to act quickly. Other signs are discolouration of the foliage or in shrubs and trees which flower the buds may form but fail to open.

How quickly the disease spreads depends on many factors but generally old plants beginning to die are more susceptible than young healthy plants, this also applies to plants that have been weakened either through draught, ground disturbance or excessive pruning.

### SOURCE

Honey Fungus usually starts by colonising an old tree stump and from about September it is possible to see clumps of yellowish toadstools around the base. Because of this it is important to remove such a stump or treat it before the disease can establish.

Treatment can be to bore holes in the stump and fill with creosote, this operation should be repeated until the whole stump has been permeated. Over a period of time it would be advisable to repeat the process.

### IDENTIFICATION

If the first signs lead you to believe in the presence of Honey Fungus the following steps should be taken.

Clear the soil away from the base of the trunk or main stem in order to expose some of the larger roots and lift a part of the bark away at the collar (where the stem meets the ground) and also from the root if possible. If the fungus is present thin white sheets of growth will be seen, often fan shaped and smelling strongly of mushrooms.

The bark can often be soft and blackened and growing from it may be found long black or brown root-like cords which are called Rhizomorphs and this certainly indicates the presence of the disease.

The fungus spreads through the soil by the Rhizomorphs usually at a depth of between 1 inch and 9 inches although in dry soils they may be slightly deeper. When the Rhizomorphs come into contact with other roots they can penetrate the tissues of the root, become parasitic and feed off the living root until it dies; even after death the fungus lives on as a saprophyte on the dead tissues.

The fungus can live up to 30 years in an old tree stump and send out a very complicated network of Rhizomorphs, this means that even if the stump is destroyed at a later date the Rhizomorphs can still affect plants for up to 6 weeks whilst looking for a new food source.

### REMEDY

As soon as the disease has been identified all dead plants should be dug up together with as much root as possible and thoroughly burnt.

A section of adjacent hedging (approximately 3 feet



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either side) or nearby plants should also be removed and burnt especially if the fungus is thought to have spread. The Rhizomorphs previously described must also be located and removed from the soil and burnt.

It is advisable where an area of infection is relatively small to actually remove the affected soil, obviously this may not be possible over large areas. In any case the following treatment should be carried out using a substance called "Brays Emulsion" which must be diluted with water in a ratio of 1 part solution to 12 parts water.

Thoroughly paint and saturate the collar (where the stem meets the ground) of adjacent plants for preferably 5 feet either side of the affected area, as the fungus does not always attack plants sequentially. Make deep holes up to 1 foot around the root spread of nearby plants and fill with diluted "Brays Emulsion". This should be carried out twice more after the fluid has drained away, finally saturate the surface of the soil.

If the soil has been removed new top soil can then be replaced and new species replanted in an effort to re-establish planting after a suitable time.

### WARNINGS

Do not saturate the entire root system of sensitive plants such as Azaleas or Rhododendrons and do not treat species with a naturally peeling bark unless infected with the disease. Do not replant deeply sterilized areas for approximately 6 months and be careful when applying "Brays Emulsion" to keep away from young shoots or newly planted species.

Brays Emulsion is normally available from the Trust Office in 5 litre cans only at a cost of £12.50 per can, and the manufacturer's instructions must be carefully followed as the Trust cannot accept any liability.

### CONCLUSION

Healthy plants are far less susceptible to this disease or any disease than weak ones, therefore feed your plants and hedges with fertiliser and add a mulch where possible.

If you are in any doubt and would like advice please do not hesitate in contacting the Trust Office.