



**Stoke-on-Trent Repertory Theatre**  
College Road, Shelton, Stoke-on-Trent  
Telephone: Stoke-on-Trent 44784

# TOAD OF TOAD HALL

by A. A. Milne

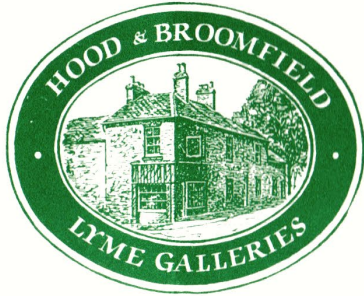
**Saturday, 21st January,  
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## Synopsis of Scenes

**Prologue** Down by the Willows

**Act I** The River Bank

**Act II**

Scene 1 The Wild Wood

Scene 2 Mr. Badger's House

Scene 3 The same some weeks later

**Act III**

Scene 1 The Court House

Scene 2 The Dungeon

Scene 3 The Canal Bank

**Act IV**

Scene 1 Rat's House by the River

Scene 2 The Underground Passage

Scene 3 The Banqueting-room at Toad Hall

**Epilogue** The Wind in the Willows

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Costumes supplied by the County Hall Dramatic Society, Chester.

Our special thanks to Leek Dramatic Society and Keele University Drama Society for the loan of some costumes.

Music composed by H. Fraser-Simson  
Play adapted from the book by Kenneth Graham  
"The Wind in the Willows"

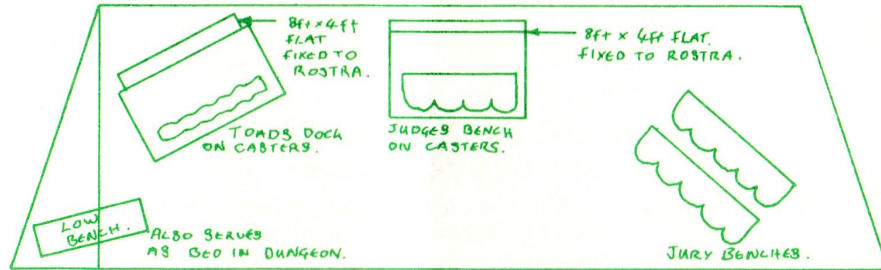
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# BEHIND THE SCENES

As soon as the last performance of a play is finished, the backstage crew gets to work. Sometimes, even before the actors have left the dressing room, people are busy dismantling 'lounge walls', 'school common rooms', and 'bedroom windows'. When you consider that there are only six weeks between each production and that the equivalent of a whole house has to be constructed and painted, you begin to realise the vast amount of work involved in each set.

The last play, 'The Servant', and 'Toad of Toad Hall' were both very complicated sets each requiring several scene changes. The whole effect is achieved by team work, especially in this play, with constant discussion between stage manager, George Goodall, and the producer, Alan Hulme.

A general idea of the scenery and props is usually given in the script, but it is not always possible to build what the author had in mind. The first two, and the biggest, problems are cost and space. The maximum effect has to be produced with the minimum of expenditure, and because the Rep stage is comparatively small, unnecessary items or props occasionally have to be eliminated or reduced. This then allows the numerous members of the cast to move about unhindered.



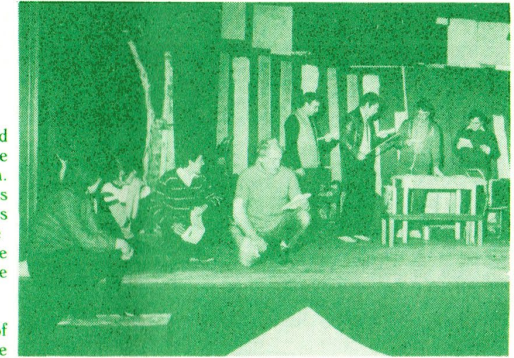
For 'Toad of Toad Hall' there was not a specific set design. Usually a scale model is made of the anticipated, finished product, but due to the eleven scene changes, this was impossible. However, a design similar to the one shown here was drawn for each scene and developed from there.

Before the scenery is built, an outline of its position on the stage will be marked out. This shows the actors the areas they will have to walk around, or where they might sit, so that they can work out the movements as soon as possible.

As you can see from the rehearsal photographs, the stage is almost bare to begin with and is built upon week by week until the final picture is complete. But when the actors rehearse, about three or four nights a week, the actual construction of the set is not possible, so work continues in the back room on smaller items.

Everybody added their own ideas for making items of scenery, using tricks of the trade. So something that is painted like a bench from one view may be a hedge on the other, then mounted on castors for ease of manoeuvrability. These are done for good reasons. It means that objects are not moved around too much and that actors and stage staff are not scrambling over lots of scenery off-stage where the props are stored between scenes.

The black cloths showing the interior of buildings were painted by the scenic designer. He begins by painting a water colour picture of the scene and then transfers it straight onto the canvas.



The producer, Alan Hulme, did not want to leave too much of the set to the children's imagination. The cartoon effect, as well as being easier to achieve, gives more colour and interest for the younger members of the audience than would perhaps a more realistic approach.

Timing - as in most aspects of theatre work - is essential. Some of the actors are required to play a multiplicity of roles and Alan has to co-ordinate them to give sufficient time to change in between scenes.

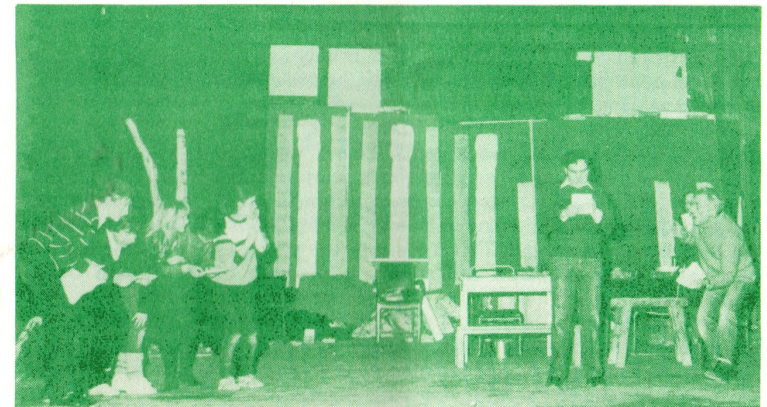
Alan's biggest nightmare was the inclusion of music and dance. To help him incorporate these without interrupting the flow of the story were the musical director and choreographer. (see next page).

Even so, Alan is no stranger to productions of this type. He has worked as a producer for local operatic productions, and realised the potential of the Rep stage having produced 'Butterflies Are Free' and appeared as an actor here over the last ten years. His face is probably best known though from Christmas and Summer shows at the Theatre because, as he says, he 'sings a bit'.

Although most of the costumes have been loaned or hired, the wardrobe mistress Verity Haddow has had to make some for some of the minor characters. Normal clothes are relatively easy to make, but how do you create a field-mouse or a mole that looks realistic enough for the audience? On our budget - as cheaply as possible!

Inevitably too, hired costumes may not fit and have to be altered, sleeves to be shortened, hem lines lowered, and in this case, tails secured. And with the help of carefully applied make-up by Jessie Shaw, the transformation from teacher, clerk and student, to rabbit, weasel and mouse should be achieved.

We hope that knowing a little of what goes on behind the scenes does not spoil your enjoyment of the play too much, but instead makes you more interested in our theatre. We hope that the Rep goes on for many more years and only through your interest and support can this be achieved.





## THE MUSIC ...

The Musical Director for the play is Les Neal, a music teacher at Hanley High School for the last twelve years. He has been a Rep member since 1956, with a break of ten years between 1960 and 1970. He has been involved with several aspects of the theatre, but has never acted here, and although he would like to, time is the biggest problem.

His first main task was to gather together the full cast for musical rehearsals - which began even before the last play finished. This involved people just singing the songs sitting around the piano and making sure they knew the words and music, (the movement and stage setting came later).

Apparently the music for the production is rarely used but the Rep, wishing to do things properly, asked Les to lend two hands. Fortunately, the music is set for the piano anyway, which makes it easier than having to conduct an orchestra with all the arrangements. Some of the musically observant among you may notice too that each animal has its own theme.



## ... AND THE DANCE

Alexandra Green was the brave person to take on the choreography for **Toad of Toad Hall**, because working with actors who are not dancers can have its limitations. She began by building up a 'pattern' just listening to the music, trying to make the dancing look effective with the minimum of effort. The small dimensions of the stage makes it impossible for the large cast to move about a lot, but still Alex has to make the movement - especially for the solos - eye-catching.

During the day Alex works as an infants teacher, and so has a fairly good idea of what will appeal to children. She finds working with children in school productions quite a challenge, because, although they do not have the suppleness of an adult, they tend to be less self-conscious about what they are doing. Obviously Alex thinks that it is never too young to learn. She started dancing at the age of three and is now a Member of the British Ballet Organisation.

This is the first time she has choreographed anything for the adult stage) and let's hope it is not the last), but she often dances in productions, both here at the Rep and with the North Staffs Operatic Society.



**PAINTING COMPETITION**

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## Toad of Toad Hall Colouring Competition

### ENTRY FORM

The competition is in two categories, one for the 5-10 age group, the other for the 11-15 year olds. There is no restriction on the materials used, but the prizes will be awarded for the best effort and most colourful entry. All drawings must be received at the Theatre by the last post on 11th March 1984.

Bring your entry to the Theatre and put it in the box provided, or post it to:  
Toad Colouring Competition, Stoke-on-Trent Repertory Theatre, College Road, Shelton, Stoke-on-Trent. We are unable to return entries.

Winners will be notified by Thursday, 22nd March 1984, and they will be invited to a 'Winner's Tea Party' on Sunday 25th March with Toad, Mr. Badger, Water Rat and Mole, when they will be presented with First, Second and Third Prizes of book tokens to the value of £5, £3 and £1.50 in each class.

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Please make sure that you have filled in the form below before posting your entry. Please use block capitals.

Name of Entrant..... Age.....

Name of Parent.....

Address.....

Home Telephone No.....

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### Improvements to the Theatre

As you will have already seen, the task of improving our building has now started. We are obviously delighted that this is so, but we regret that you may experience some inconvenience while the work is in progress.

Naturally we believe that it will all be worthwhile, and we hope that in three or four months time you will be able to appreciate the improvement to the theatre building and its facilities.

Once again we offer our apologies and hope that it does not interfere with your enjoyment of **Toad of Toad Hall**.

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Sunday, 19th February, 1984

7.30 p.m.

Tickets **£1.50** (including coffee)

Box office open 16th, 17th and 18th February, 1984  
between 4.00 p.m. and 7.00 p.m.

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#### Car Park

The part of Beresford Street between St. Jude's Church and the schools may be used for parking, but please ensure that cars do not obstruct the entrance to the Vicarage. No responsibility is accepted by the Repertory Theatre. No charge is made for parking.

#### Refreshments

Confectionery is always on sale and coffee will be served during the interval. Coffee tickets available from the attendants.

**Smoking is permitted during the intervals only.**

#### Smokers Please Note:

Please use the ashtrays provided. Smokers on the front row should ask an attendant for an ashtray.

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