

Suburb bucket lady

You might be surprised to see a diminutive lady walking around Temple Fortune carrying a ladder and two buckets. Doris Walker-Bagg is a window cleaner in her seventies. Doris has converted to Judaism, and reckons that she is the only female Jewish window cleaner in Britain. She might well be right.



Ernest Walker-Bagg, her husband, began the business in 1949 in order to be self-employed. He was unable to obtain reliable assistants, and suggested that Doris help him "just for an hour a day". She started by getting up at 5.00 am, working for an hour, then returning home to wake her two girls, and take them to school. In time she worked longer hours; and had to become used to working at heights in the many

Suburb houses and shops. Although they were Christian, most of their customers were Jewish, and they had to learn to fit in around the Jewish holidays. They were rather intrigued by these customs and began to learn more about them.

In 1966 Doris' husband became ill and had to stop work overnight. He had pioneering open heart surgery. Doris had to continue working to support the family, and took over the whole round. Unfortunately, some of the customers took advantage because she was on her own, and tried to make her do extra work for nothing. Other window cleaners turned up at her clients claiming to be her brother, and tried to take her business. Doris learned to be tough in a man's world. One dress shop in Temple Fortune required their windows to be cleaned once a week properly, plus twice a week only half way up; in order to save money. It looked rather ridiculous when the wind blew the dust on to the top halves.

Mr Walker-Bagg was able to return to work, beginning at one hour a day; their roles were reversed. He was able to work a few more years. After he died Doris continued the business on her own. She was relieved to get rid of the nastier customers. Only one other window cleaner offered her any help when she was ill. Others tried to muscle in on her business. Normally a cleaning round has a value, and one can sell it: Doris had to defend her round.

By the eighties business became slightly easier: the fraternity had their own code of honour. If a customer moved, then the window cleaner who previously worked at the premises would have first refusal. This civilised behaviour has disappeared again though in these recessionary times; and some new shops have even cut their frequency of cleaning to just once a fortnight.

Doris used to work at Fellowship House on Wednesday afternoons, and chatted to the soft-toy making group. Now she has had to give up places with small paned windows, because her hands do not have the strength any more. She considers that she is fit because she has been very active in her life. The so-called fresh air is not beneficial because it is full of car fumes.

Doris has a cultivated voice, and well manicured nails. She teaches Hebrew reading, and works in the Highgate Hospice shop. She is also trying to set up a Day Centre for the homeless in Barnet. Her future plan is to move to Swansea near her daughter and to start a Reform Synagogue community. JN

"The Crucible"

After the family show, "Pinocchio", in February, the Garden Suburb Theatre will be presenting "The Crucible" by Arthur Miller. Described by director, Richard Kinder, as 'one of the best dramas of the 20th century', it is as popular today as when it was first produced forty years ago.

The play is set in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692 and centres on the trial for witchcraft in which many of the villagers of this God-fearing community were alleged to have been involved. What made the play so successful in the 1950s, however, was the clear analogy drawn by Miller with the McCarthy trials for un-American activities which were taking place in the United States at that time. There are still parallels today - the Cleveland child abuse scandal of only five years ago arose from the same type of public hysteria.

"The Crucible" will be performed on 28th, 29th and 30th April (please see "What's On" for details) and promises to be a dramatic and moving production.

Terry Rogers, who has directed several successful musicals in the past, is hoping to imitate the large scale productions of earlier times in "Little Acorns", a special gala night on 21 May. He aims to feature every single member of the Garden Suburb Theatre! The evening will consist of highlights from some popular past productions, though some of them may not be quite as you remember them...

By supporting these events you will be making a vital contribution towards the Oak Wood project (and your own comfort and pleasure next time you go to an outdoor show!) DL



"The Rivals"

Guy Boas, in his introduction to Sheridan's first play, written when he was only 23, says "How can a student of English social history enter the eighteenth century more delightfully than through Sheridan's drawing-rooms?"

There seemed to be a great number of students at the performance given recently at the Institute and one wonders what they made of this lack-lustre production. There was very little style here and the contrast

ST JUDE'S NATIVITY PLAY



In the St Jude's Nativity play, based on the medieval Coventry mystery plays, Mary was played by Holly Blunden and Joseph by Stefanie Connaway. It was produced by Lynda Ayers and Jill Ambrose with wonderful costumes by Anthea Davidson.

RNLI Record

At the annual Bring/Buy held at Fellowship House on 6th November '93, the RNLI Hampstead Garden Suburb Branch Committee raised exactly £1,000.

This is the first time we have ever achieved four figures, and the Committee is most grateful to all those who attended the Bring/Buy and all those kind persons who helped on the various stalls. CS

Getting On

In Alan Bennett's play the phase 'getting on' does not mean getting on in the world but rather getting on in years, and it reveals the author in one of his more querulous moods. Not that the play isn't very funny in places, but the whole tone is one of life and people not being what they were.

It is London in the late seventies, and we are in the basement flat of George Oliver MP, where he lives with his second wife, Polly, and his son, Andy.

Returning from a hard day at the House he finds Polly cheerfully chatting to Geoff, a young man who earns a little money by doing odd jobs but who is otherwise foot-loose and fancy-free. His fancy leans towards Polly who, since George is rather boring, is inclined to respond. George's MP friend, Brian Lowther, drops in as does Polly's mother, Enid Baker, and

later Mrs Brodribb, who much prefers dogs to human beings. That is all that happens but there is some quite amusing talk during the evening.

George Rose looked and sounded impressive as the world-weary George, and Michael Sabine-Bacon handled Brian's confession that he is a homosexual and has been having a liaison with Geoff with great skill. Tim Solomons made quite a charming Geoff, but he really must learn to speak to the audience and not to his boots. There were two lovely lively performances from Marian Fielding (Polly) and Joan Walsh (Enid), and Janet Pleshette got every ounce of humour out of her brief appearance as Mrs Brodribb.

David Rance designed a really excellent set. The play, which is not by any means one of Bennett's best, was produced by Robert Jayes. LS

Richard Kinder, thoughtful performance as Faulkland

between the pairs of lovers was not explored. Lydia Languish can only respond to Jack Absolute when he is transformed into the hero of one of the many novels she reads, and is mortified when she discovers that her "Beverley" is not poor but quite rich. Julia Melville, on the other hand, is plagued by a suitor who cannot believe in her love unless she pines for him during his absence. Faulkland is driven to distraction at the thought of her laughing or dancing while he is away. Only Richard Kinder as Faulkland has really looked deeper into his character and gave a thoughtful and well-spoken performance. Susan Quine (Lydia), Natalie Berg (Julia) and John Musker (Jack) gave very superficial portrayals and missed most of the clues in the text.

Patrice Sheldon as Mrs Malaprop and Rusty Ashman as the object of her desire, Lucius O'Trigger, had a certain verve and style and brightened the proceedings. The production was, as usual, beautifully dressed by Frances Musker, Sheena Ross and Jeanne Solomons. But it exhibited again the one great failing of the Garden Suburb Theatre, namely poor speech. After the very well spoken production of "Twelfth Night" it was depressing to listen to such poor diction and voice production. Speaking clearly does not mean shouting, especially in this hall where noise just bounces back from the walls. Perhaps they should invest in a Voice Coach as they did a Movement Coach. LS

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