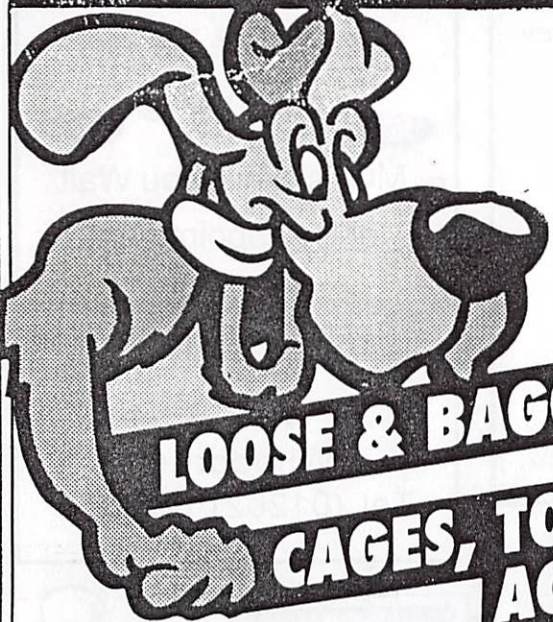


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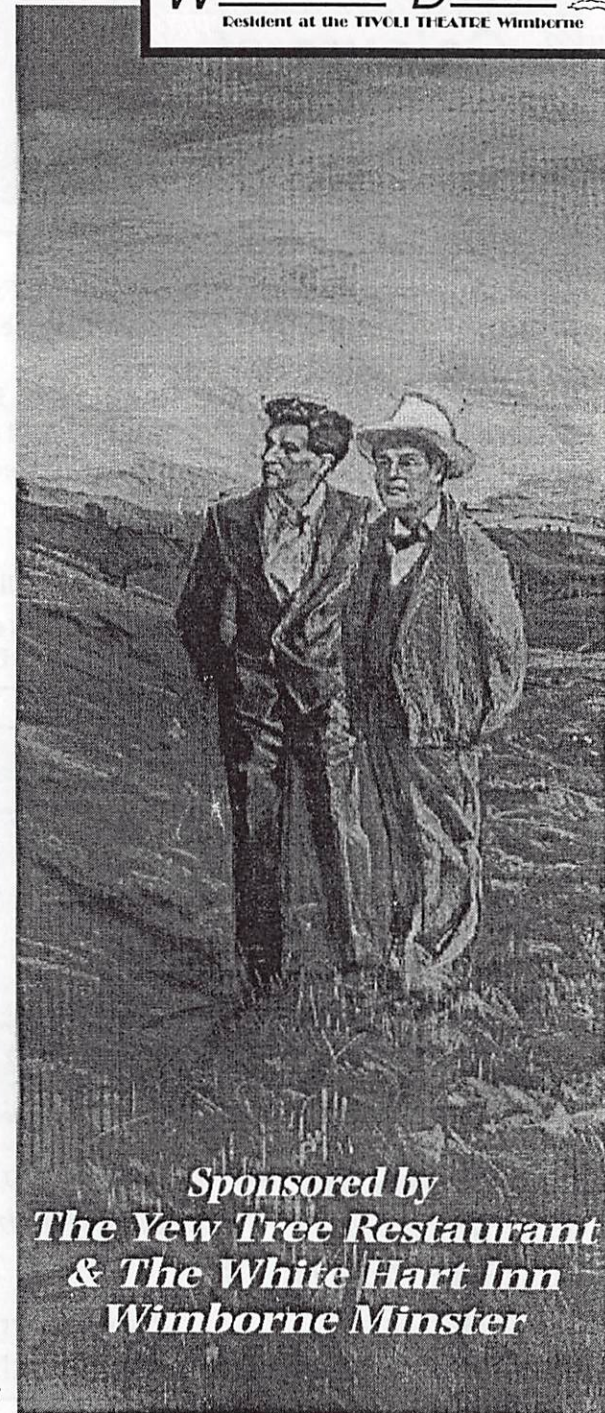
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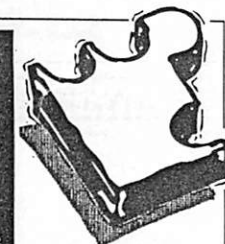
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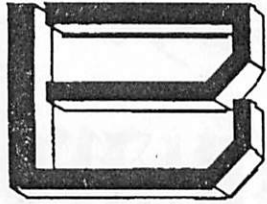
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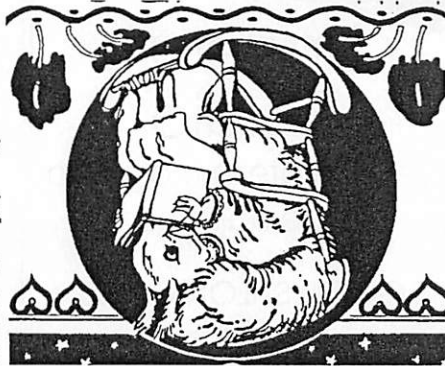
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Foreword

by John Mortimer

Everyone has, or had, a father. This simple fact is perhaps, what has made *A Voyage Round My Father* my most popular play. It has been performed often, in various parts of the world, and I suppose the mixture of love, exasperation, awe and ridicule we feel for fathers has found an echo in all sorts of audiences. In the nature of things fathers die, we emerge from their shadows and take their places. We do our best not to repeat their mistakes, but live, inevitably, by some of their rules. Our sons and daughters will find us as lovable, detestable, wise or ridiculous as we found our fathers and perhaps they will end up writing plays about us.

I suppose we all think our fathers are not quite like anyone else in the world. I certainly did. My father was no doubt thought of as an eccentric and yet, in spite of his alarming rages, he was a fundamentally reasonable man with a great deal of common sense. Being reasonable he didn't understand why he should have to live exactly like other people, or put up with things which he hated, such as soft boiled eggs, cold plates or visitors. You will, I hope, get to know him well but perhaps I could just give you a few clues to start with.

My father's name was Clifford Mortimer. He was born at the end of the last century, when Queen Victoria was on the throne. He studied to be a barrister, did very well in his exams



and specialised in divorce cases and cases about people's wills. A barrister is, of course, the sort of lawyer who wears a wig and

stands up in court cross questioning witnesses and arguing a case. My father was extremely good at his job and he was not only an expert at arguing, he enjoyed it immensely. At home, when he was not in court, my father would say outrageous things just for the pleasure of starting an argument. It was his training and his pleasure to take any side in an argument.

Just before the last war something happened of great and tragic significance in my father's life and, incidentally, in mine also. He went blind. He never saw me as a grown-up person, never saw my wife or his grandchildren. From then on he never saw the garden he loved so dearly. However, and this is a matter of great importance in understanding his character, he went on potting plants and cutting off dead flowers, he worked harder and for longer hours in the garden than when he could see. He made my mother or me describe the garden in detail to him, and he could always smell the flowers.

My father's eyes had always been bad. He finally went blind by hitting his head and the force of the blow detached his retinas, the layers at the back of the

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Players' Notes

Joe Brooks has been with Wimborne Drama since 1960, and is an experienced actor and director. Most recently he directed our production of *Run For Your Wife* in February 1996. Val Mantle played Matron in *Forty Years On* (November 1996) and has previously appeared in various productions for Broadstone Players and Ferndown Drama Group. Paul Dodman takes his first speaking part with Wimborne Drama, although he made a guest appearance as *Gary Lineker* earlier this year. Paul helps to teach drama to youngsters in Boscombe. Ann Pond played Muriel in *Woman In Mind* (June 1996) and was Assistant Director on *An Evening With Gary Lineker*.

Simon Jackson, Barry Baynton and Jeremy Austin all have vast experience locally. For Wimborne Drama, Simon was Ian in *An Evening With Gary Lineker* and Gerald in *Woman In Mind*. Barry directed *Forty Years On*, Jeremy playing the Headmaster in that production, and both tried to uphold the law in *Run For Your Wife*. Tony Willmet will be familiar to you from his appearances in *Woman in Mind* and *Run For Your Wife*.

Carolyn Hewitt, Jan Stevenson and Chrissie Wathen are long-standing members of Wimborne Drama and have been involved in numerous productions. All three appeared in our October 1995 production of *And So To Bed*. More recently Chrissie was Monica in *An Evening With Gary Lineker*.

Wayne Dewey and Alex Dunnachie return to the stage at the Tivoli following their success in *Forty Years On*. We welcome Lucy Rossiter and Laura Hayes who both make their debuts for the Club this week.

Richard Neal directed *Woman In Mind* last year. His acting credits include appearances in *An Evening With Gary Lineker*, *Forty Years On* and *Run For Your Wife*.

eyeball which are sensitive to light. No doubt modern surgery could cure this complaint. At that time there seemed to be no cure and he spent the rest of his life in darkness.

Faced with this stunning disability my father's courage took a curious form. He simply ignored it. He didn't adjust his life to blindness. He didn't have a trained dog or read Braille books. He continued to travel up to London by train to do his cases in court. My mother had to read out the evidence in his divorce cases to him and she would sit beside him in the carriage trying to recite the awful stories of unfaithful wives and husbands as quietly as

possible. When the train ground to a halt somewhere round Slough, all the other people in the carriage would fall silent, listening to my embarrassed mother in the hope of learning something scandalous about the lives of some close friend or relative.

What else can I tell you about my father? He was a very clean man who always had two baths a day. He quoted from Shakespeare at inappropriate moments and he knew the Sherlock Holmes stories very well, telling them to me on long country walks. In the country he wore old tweed suits much darned by my mother and a collapsing straw hat. He never really told me the difference between right and wrong but he set the standards, both in writing and in living, which I have tried, however unsuccessfully, to live up to. From as far back as I can remember he never condescended to me as a child. He treated me as a grown-up person. I have tried to do the same thing with my children.



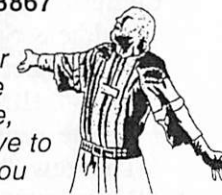
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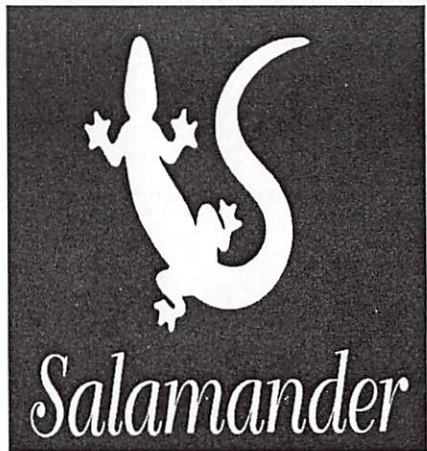
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