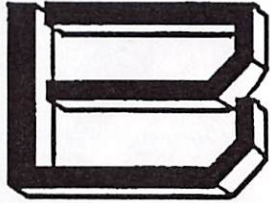


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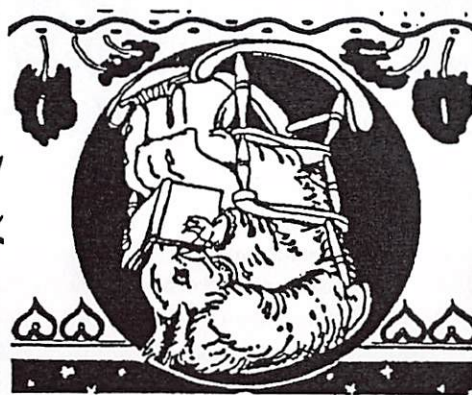
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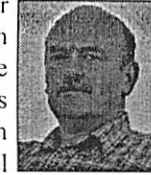
Sweeney Todd, the demon barber of Fleet Street, tells the tale of a barber, the victim of injustice that robbed him not only of his freedom but also his wife and infant daughter. Deported for life on a trumped up charge, Todd escapes and returns to London. He seeks his revenge on the Judge and Beadle who had him sent away

The first stage dramatisation was in 1847 when George Dibden Pitt's *The String of Pearls or The Fiend of Fleet Street* opened at the Britannia Theatre Hoxton, since when many different versions were staged in and around London in theatres which became known as 'blood baths' reflecting the type of plays which they put on.

In 1923 Tod Slaughter put on Sweeney Todd at the Elephant and Castle Theatre with his company *The Barnstormers*. He continued to play the part of Todd with his wife very often playing Mrs Lovett until he died in 1956. He also appeared in the George King film *The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* in 1936.

In 1927 Andrew Melville played Todd at the New Theatre with a very young John Gielgud playing the part of one of the Bow Street Runners.

Dave Williams (A Balding Man) After an initial introduction to Amdram in Berkshire in the early seventies Dave had a run of four pantomime seasons at Exeter. A period in Gibraltar saw him in various productions, including Noel Cowards favourite part in *Hands Across The Sea*, the Grandfather in *The Miasma of Mostyn Mews*, and several parts in a musical production of *Oh What A Lovely War*, making his debut as a solo vocalist. Dave joined Wimborne Drama at the same time as his son, John and took the title role in *Mr Macaroni*.



John Williams (Tobias Ragg) Most of John's stage experience has been in school productions where his successes have included a rather drunken Miss Hannigan in *Annie* and Captain Schmalsky in *Bugsy Malone*. In his last school production he played Kwasind in an original production of Longfellow's *Hyawatha* at Queen's College, Taunton. John joined Wimborne Drama in 1997 just in time to play Nigel Nostril in *Mr Macaroni* where his reviews marked him as a performer to watch in the future.



Tony Willmet (A Beadle) currently lives in Wimborne but has spent a good deal of his life overseas. He has been with Wimborne Drama for the past four years since which time he has played such diverse parts as a homosexual window dresser in *Run For Your Wife* in 1996, an imaginary husband in *Woman in Mind* in 1997, and later the same year he played the part of the eccentric schoolmaster Japhet in *A Voyage Round My Father*. Tony also involves himself with the publicity for productions put on by Wimborne Drama.



Daphne Young (A Greengrocer) moved from Lancashire to Wimborne and almost immediately joined Wimborne Drama. Between 1951 and 1968 she appeared in a dozen or more productions with particularly happy memories of *Saloon Bar*, *When We Are Married*, *Bonaventure*, *Love in a Mist*, *Goodnight*, *Mrs Puffin*, *Pools Paradise* and *The Shop at Sly Corner*. Her daughter, Carolyn Hewitt persuaded her to 'swell the crowd' for *Sweeney Todd*.



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Ian Taylor (*Lighting Director*) has had experience both on and off the stage for Oakmead School, Bournemouth Youth Theatre and Poole Arts Centre. His appearances in front of the lights include The Mad Hatter in *Alice in Wonderland*, Richard in *Gregory's Girl*, Seaton in *Macbeth* as well as several others. His lighting design experience includes *Grease*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, several *Big Band Concerts*, and winning awards at both the 1997 and 1998 *Rock Challenge* held at The Bournemouth Pavilion.



Chrissie Wathen (*Eliza Fogg*) is a long standing member of Wimborne Drama who has involved herself in just about every aspect of production. She has been associated with many of the group's plays but most recently her acting credits include Monica in *An Evening With Gary Lineker*, 2nd ATS in *A Voyage Round My Father*, and Mistress Pierce in *And So To Bed*. Chrissie was Stage Manager for *Woman in Mind* and *A Voyage Round My Father*.



Geoff Whipp (*Sweeney Todd*) was born in Chester and his work includes Lord Arthur in *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*, Ralph in *Accrington Pals*, Hugo and Frederick in *Ring Round the Moon*, Gratiano in *The Merchant of Venice*, Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Berowne in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Angelo in *Measure for Measure* and, most recently, Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*. Since joining Wimborne Drama in 1996 he directed *An Evening with Gary Lineker* for which he received a nomination for 'Best Director', appeared as Franklin in *Forty Years On* and a pirate in *Mr Macaroni*.



Anne Whiteside (*Wardrobe*) has been running wardrobe for various musical companies for the past twelve years and *Sweeney Todd* is her first departure into straight drama. Anne's ability to produce an excellent and faithful end result, regardless of what the actor or actress feel they should have has given her the wonderful title of *the wardrobe mistress from hell!* She is also a member of the English Civil War Society, where, for the past twenty two years she has been faithfully reproducing authentic historical costume for herself and others.

TALE OF TODD

In 1959 the Ballet *Sweeney Todd* choreographed by John Cranko, with music by Malcolm Arnold was performed by the Royal Ballet Company at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford on Avon.

Our version of the play, written by Christopher Bond, portrays Sweeney Todd in a more sympathetic light than perhaps he deserves, giving him justification for his murderous actions. It was put on at the Victoria Theatre, Stoke on Trent, later transferring to the Theatre Royal, Stratford East with Brian Murphy as Sweeney Todd and Avis Bunnage as Mrs Lovett.

1979 saw the Broadway opening of Stephen Sondheim's musical version of Bond's play at the Uris Theatre, New York with Len Cariou as Todd and Angela Lansbury as Mrs Lovett. It later transferred to the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane with Dennis Quilley and Sheila Hancock in the roles. More recently, in 1993, Alun Armstrong and Julia McKenzie took the lead roles in a Royal National Theatre production.

Currently Opera North are undergoing a national tour of the full operatic version of the saga which they are playing to huge critical acclaim.

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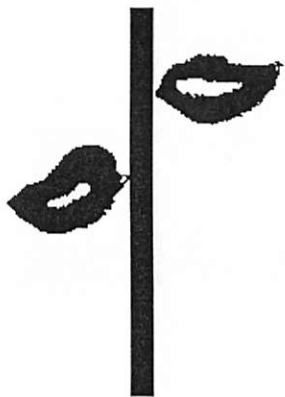
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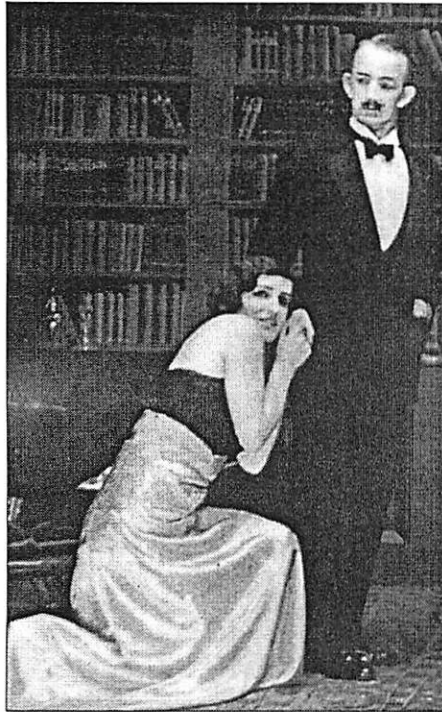
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WIMBORNE 1928 -

November this year marks the seventieth anniversary of Wimborne Drama. In November 1928 a group of enthusiasts decided to form 'The Wimborne Dramatic Society'. There were, of course, other drama groups in the town before this date, but there appears to be no record of them.



A scene from the very first production 'Ambrose Applejohn's Adventure'

The first production was an ambitious one. *Ambrose Applejohn's Adventure*, according to the records, had a cast of over forty people but all that remains of that inaugural production are a few photographs, which show it to be a rather stylish affair. A verbal appraisal affirmed that it was "A jolly good

Penny Scotford (*Director*) was born in North Wales, grew up in Berkshire and moved to Dorset in 1984. She began her drama at the tender age of seven where she appeared as a fairy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Since then Penny has performed at music festivals as well as appearing in *Move Over Mrs Markham*, *The Day After the Fair*, *The Deep Blue Sea*, Micky in the female version of *The Odd Couple*, Cicely in *84, Charing Cross Road*, Clara Soppitt in *When We Are Married*, and, most recently, Ruth in Alan Ayckborne's *Living Together*. *Sweeney Todd* marks her debut as director.



Sheila Smith (*Makeup*) enjoyed a certain success as a child with ballet but it was short lived as she grew older and too big for the art. An English and drama degree led her to be involved in directing and stage managing many productions and now she simply likes getting her hands dirty doing a bit of everything. *Sweeney Todd* is Sheila's fifth production for Wimborne Drama, all of which she has been 'happily mucking about backstage'.



Jan Stevenson (*Mrs Lovett*) joined Wimborne Drama in 1979 with the sole intention of doing nothing more than work backstage After being given the part of Pippin, the bumbling maid in *George and Margaret* she was well and truly bitten by the bug, and has been ever since. Jan's first major part was Ruth in *Blythe Spirit*. A few of the many other plays she has appeared in include *Dear Octopus*, *Quiet Weekend*, *Dangerous Corner*, *Tomb With A View*, *Bedroom Farce* and *One For The Road*.



Geoff Stone (*Designer*) studied Art & Design locally prior to studying illustration at Cambridge. He has worked for the House of Commons, doing studies of Messrs Blair, Major & Ashdown as well as mounting an exhibition of work on the Royal Family which travelled to London Birmingham and Edinburgh. His work has appeared in *The Guardian*. He currently works on freelance commissions.



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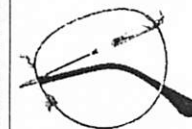
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Martin Matthews (*The Watch*) has lived in Wimborne for the past 23 years and was educated locally. He studied drama and theatre studies and has used The Tivoli since he was a boy. He played Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and acted and worked for Wimborne Community Arts projects, including *Rings of Change*, at Knowlton Church. Martin has also gained valuable experience whilst working backstage at Poole Arts Centre on productions of *Don Giovanni* and *Frankie and Johnnie*.



Christian Napier (*A Prisoner*) has lived in Wimborne all his life. Since appearing as Pharaoh in a first school production of *Joseph* he has been hooked on drama. Past productions include *Jerusalem Joy* and *The Evacuees* at Allenbourn School, and he played the lead in a production of *Joseph* for his church and has appeared in, written, and directed many Christian sketches, also for the church. This is Christian's first play for Wimborne Drama.



Richard Neal (*Alfredo Pirelli*) is the Chairman of Wimborne Drama. His acting credits include Malcolm in *Bedroom Farce*, Dennis in *One for the Road*, Charles II in *And So To Bed*, John Smith in *Run For Your Wife*, Tempest in *Forty Years On* and Dan in *An Evening With Gary Lineker*. Richard directed *Woman in Mind* and John Mortimer's *A Voyage Round My Father* last year. His appearances with previous theatre groups include *Alphabetical Order*, *Outside Edge* and *The Real Thing*.



Margaret Pope (*Beggar Woman*) trained at the Hampshire School of Music and Drama under the late Irene Crokin. Her roles include Mrs Reed in *Jane Eyre*, Dora Randolph in *Dear Octopus*, Helen Kroger in *Pack of Lies*, Miss Mitchum-Brown in *The Secret Tent*, Miss Smythe in *Move Over Mrs Markham*, Dora Tomb in *Tomb With a View*, Mrs Bell in *Death and the Maiden*, Miss Mockridge in *Dangerous Corner*, Audrey in *Ten Times Table*, Flora van Huysen in *The Matchmaker*, and Miss Nisbett in *Forty Years On* for which she was nominated 'Best Supporting Actress'.

DRAMA

1998

show". At a later date a repeat performance was demanded.

At one point in its history Wimborne Dramatic Society merged with Wimborne Operatic Society and became, not surprisingly, Wimborne Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society. This relationship was short lived as the high cost of staging musical works started to eat into the profits from the traditional straight drama and finances began to suffer. A sad but amiable parting took place and Wimborne Drama Club flourished once again.

Early plays were staged at the W. I. Hall until it was demolished, when they were transferred to Church House. Fire restrictions caused this venue to be abandoned in favour of "the new secondary modern school at Pamphill" and thence to the Allendale Centre.

In 1994 came a large step forward when, with the reopening of The Tivoli Theatre, Wimborne Drama were invited to become the theatre's resident amateur group. This certainly gave far greater scope with a much larger stage and far better facilities. The members rarely forget that they are, in many ways, privileged to be working in such a fine and important theatre.

The past seventy years have seen both highs and lows; successes and (*just possibly*) the odd failure. One thing, however, is for certain: The members of Wimborne Drama have had a great deal of enjoyment in getting together over the past seventy years with the sole aim of providing enjoyment and entertainment for our audiences.

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When we ask someone to join Wimborne Drama, the reply we frequently get is "Why should I join, I'll never set foot on stage". Whilst some of our members do, indeed, want to act, there are others who would never ever be seen on stage but join in with the many other jobs concerned with putting on a play. When a play is staged there are usually far fewer people

We meet at a monthly meeting as well as meeting socially for skittles, quiz nights, etc. We usually put on three main plays a year, these are chosen from plays suggested by members, some of them are read at play-readings at which members either take an active part in or simply come and listen - the choice is theirs. One thing is certain, we definitely have fun in

"I say, I say, I say"

on stage than there are off in fact as you watch tonight's performance there will generally be several members just out of sight, making sure that all runs smoothly. In addition to these there are those who helped in the preparation leading up to the play. The point we are making is - why not think about joining Wimborne Drama - if you want to appear on stage that's fine, but if not there's as much fun to be had off stage as there is on it.

meeting, socialising, deciding, rehearsing and putting on the final result. Our longest serving member has been a member for 48 years and our newest members are Tiffany and Christian who came along to watch a rehearsal six weeks ago and ended up appearing in tonight's play!

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Rebecca Gunnell (A Milkmaid) Prior to joining Wimborne Drama Becky has appeared in several operas including *The Magic Flute* and *Dido & Aeneas* as well as writing the music for an adaptation of *Cinderella*. Since becoming a member she has appeared in *Run For Your Wife*, *Forty Years On* and *Woman in Mind*, and directed *The Interview* by J C van Itallie, for festivals at Ferndown and New Milton, winning a trophy at each venue. Last year Becky played Juliet in *Measure for Measure* for the Wiltshire based group Small Moving Parts.



Carolyn Hewitt (Johanna) first became interested in drama at school when she played Ado Annie in *Oklahoma*. She joined Wimborne Drama twenty one years ago when she took the part of Susie in *The Amorous Prawn*. During that twenty one years she has taken numerous diverse parts in various productions. The most recent parts include Pauline in the club's festival production of Harold Pinter's *A Kind of Alaska* and Daphne in *A Voyage Round My Father*.



Simon Jackson (A Carpenter and Stage Manager) has been involved with various theatre groups in Yorkshire and Dorset, taking parts in musicals, drama, pantomime as well as William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Recent appearances with Wimborne Drama have included Gerald in *Woman in Mind* Ian in *An Evening With Gary Lineker*, (for which he was nominated Best Supporting Actor in a Comedy) he took several parts in *A Voyage Round My Father* and *Wordsworth*, a cheeky waiter in *Mr Macaroni* and *the Exploding Pizza Pie*.



Tiffany Kenyon (A Young Stranger) was born in Ontario, Canada in 1982 and moved to Dorset when she was eleven. She is a recent addition to Wimborne Drama and *The Tivoli*. Although she has not appeared in many major productions, she has been seen in a number of school productions which include parts in both *Bugsy Malone* and *The Tempest* for Talbot Heath. As well as her part in *Sweeney Todd* Tiffany is also currently rehearsing for *The Skin Of Our Teeth* for Bournemouth School for Girls.



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Joe Brooks (Judge Turpin) has been with Wimborne Drama for a long time and in amateur theatre even longer! In 1996 he directed and very much enjoyed *Run For Your Wife* and last year loved playing

the title role in *A Voyage Round My Father*. Joe took a part in two of our recent festival plays, Pinter's *A Kind of Alaska* and Miller's *Elegy for a Lady*. He had a small part in *And So To Bed* but the thing he remembers most about it is making a dummy harpsichord with folding legs. It only cost £15 which, as Treasurer, still gives him a warm glow.



Muriel Brooks (A Flower Seller) A long-standing member, Muriel always enjoys doing what she can, although these days in the background and seldom on stage. Most of her public appearances are with the Choral Society now. Earlier in her membership she played Madame Desmortes in Jean Anhouilh's *Ring Round The Moon* and many other leading roles.



Paul Dodman (Anthony Hope) has lived most of his life in Wimborne Minster. He has worked for the Royal Shakespeare Company's Youth Theatre; He played George Bernard Shaw in *The Matchgirls* and The Nun's Priest in *The Canterbury Tales*. Whilst studying English at University he stage managed *The Crucible* and more recently Paul co-directed the Bournemouth Youth Theatre in *Macbeth* and Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. At Wimborne Drama he appeared in *An Evening With Gary Lineker* and played the son in John Mortimer's *A Voyage Round My Father*.



Christopher Dowie (Musical Director) was Organ Scholar at Hertford College, Oxford before becoming Organist and Master Chorister at Wimborne Minster in 1977.

He is well known both locally and further afield as a conductor, composer and recitalist. He plays regularly with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and is accompanist and Assistant Choir Master of the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus with whom he has performed in many English concert halls as well as in Florida and Israel.

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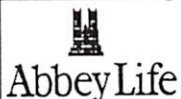
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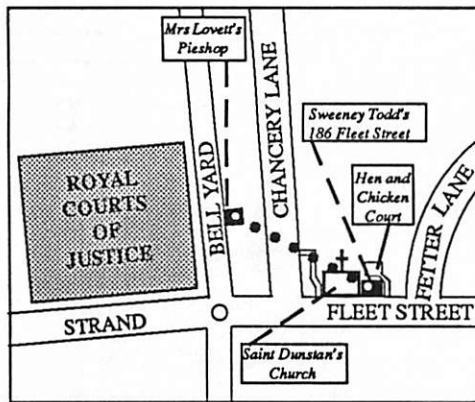
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part of the labyrinth of passageways belonging to St Dunstan's Church next door.

First suspicions were raised after several years of the lucrative partnership when the Beadle of St Dunstan's heeded reports of the "foul and abominable odours" which abounded in the area - reports which were given credence by the Reverend Joseph Stillingport, St Dunstan's Rector, who was affected by the stench whilst delivering his sermon. He was seen to "hold to his pious mouth a kerchief containing some pungent essence in an attempt to stifle the horrible effluvia".

Gossip concerning Todd's disappearing customers continued to abound and a careful watch was kept on his premises. Bow Street Runners were posted in premises opposite and they reported to the magistrate that markedly more people entered the premises than did leave. A search of the church vaults was ordered and it was only when bones were found in the passageway which connected the two shops that



Fleet Street today, showing the sites of Sweeney Todd's barber shop and Mrs Lovett's pie shop

the full gruesome truth of the whole business began to unfold.

Firstly Margery Lovett was arrested. She said: "Believing that I am on the edge of the grave, I, Margery Lovett make this statement: Sweeney Todd conceived the idea of that mutual guilt which we have both since carried out . . . he came to me and made his offer. I was willing. He proposed that the pie shop should be opened for the sole purpose of getting rid of the bodies

of people he might think proper to murder in or under his shop. He said that fearing nothing and believing nothing, he had come to the conclusion that money was the greatest thing to be desired in the world, inasmuch as that he had found that all people bowed down to it. He said that after the murder of anyone, he would take the flesh from the bones quickly and convey it to the shelves of the bakehouse in Bell Yard, the pieces to be materials for the pies. Minor arrangements he left to me. He murdered many. The business went on and prospered and we both grew rich. This is how we fell to our present state".

She was imprisoned but committed suicide shortly afterwards. She was found at 8.00 am a few days before Christmas, 1801.

Sweeney Todd was subsequently arrested and some weeks later he was brought to trial. Each day of the trial the streets outside the Old Bailey were packed with onlookers, curious to catch a glimpse of London's most notorious killer.

When all had been said the jury reportedly spent less than five minutes in passing a verdict of guilty. The judge said "Sweeney Todd, you have been convicted of the crime of murder and certain circumstances lead irresistibly to the belief that your life for years past has been one frightful scene of murder". He then donned the black cap and ordered Todd to "Leave this world to make your peace in another". He cleared his throat before continuing "It is now my painful duty to pass upon you the sentence of the law, which is that you be take from here to a place of execution and hanged by the neck until dead. May heaven have mercy upon you. You cannot expect that society can do otherwise than put out of life someone who, like yourself, has been a terror and a scourge".

At 8.00am on Tuesday January 28th, 1802 at the age of 45, the most horrendous mass murderer in British history "died hard" on the gallows at a public hanging in front of a crowd of thousands. - His crime? The reputed murder of one hundred and sixty victims.

Director's notes

The odd thing about acting in a play is that you never really get to know all of the characters. It's an awful admission to make but I suppose that, to a point, you tend to get so involved with the part that you're playing that the other parts are kept at arms length.

This is my first time as director and it was to both my great surprise and relief when I found that I was able to 'get to know' all of the people who lived around the Sweeney Todd of our play.

Not, perhaps, the type of people one would want to get to know too well - at least not most of them, but what a colourful lot they are: Mrs Lovett, the 18th century Bett Lynch of pie-shop keepers; Judge Turpin, the politician who is trying to keep his earlier sexual desires and indiscretions hidden; Anthony Hope and Johanna who idealistically believe that their love will conquer all; the Beggar woman, an outcast with a



tale to tell; Tobias Ragg who keeps smiling through despite being used by one and then another crooked employer; Alfredo Pirelli the colourful showman selling dreams of one sort or another and, of course Sweeney Todd, a man who has been wronged who believes he has the right to take the law into his own hands.

I could so easily go through the entire cast, each one of them as colourful as the next, but what is so unusual about this, and what makes Sweeney Todd such a good play is the fact that all of these diverse characters meet each other in the same play and they meet in this sordid part of London at a time when it was at its most sordid.

It seems a long time since we all sat down at the first rehearsal to read through the play. Since then we have seen it all develop and blossom into something really worthwhile. (Worthwhile for us to do, that is. Events will dictate whether it was worthwhile for you, the audience, to sit through). Rehearsals have certainly been immense fun - on two occasions I have had to announce to the cast that the general laughter

and fun whilst rehearsing was not doing rehearsals much good - and I was one of the main culprits! Much more than that, though, I've seldom seen such enthusiasm for a play. One of the main things needed for a successful production is, of course, the barber's chair, which is not an easy thing to make; but before he was even asked, Eddy Colton phoned me up early in January asking me to come and take a look at the chair which he had already made. Needless to say it was superb. Another potentially insurmountable problem was, of course, how to construct a two storey building

onto the stage of the Tivoli! Once again, early in February, a local company, Extreme Exhibitions Ltd offered to do just this for us at exactly the budget we had in mind (i.e. nothing) Our undying thanks go to them.

Thanks also to Roy Joseph for putting up with us at costume fittings and for keeping visitors to Stapehill Abbey out of our way during our photoshoots! There were many other examples of how everything slotted nicely into place and with the cast dropping their books well before the date I had suggested they do so we have plenty of time to fine tune the play to a point which we all hope will entertain.

I hear that a page of the programme will be given over to a membership drive to swell the ranks of Wimborne Drama. All I can add is that if anyone interested in joining us had been present at rehearsals for Sweeney they would have no second thoughts about becoming a member, and if the play is half as entertaining as I think it will be, we won't be short of patrons either!

A huge thank you, then, to everyone who has lent a hand, however small, in mounting the play. Sweeney Todd is a production which I will certainly always remember for the very best of reasons.

Penny Scotford

THE FLEET STREET OF SWEENEY TODD

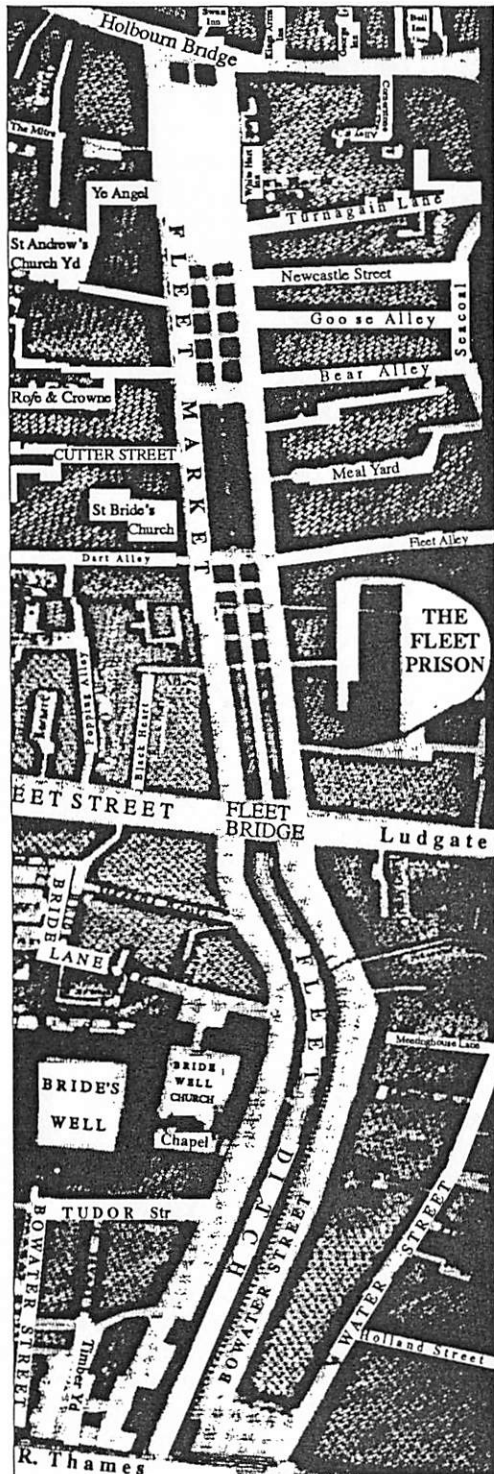
What exactly was Fleet Street before it became the 'Fleet Street' of today? It had certainly been an important place for centuries, being the main thoroughfare between the two ancient Londons - to the West lay the city of Westminster, the home of the British Parliament, the Abbey and the Court as well as being at the heart of the fashionable West End with its leafy squares and elegant town houses when it began to flourish in the seventeenth century; whilst to the East was the City of London with its merchants, financial centres, manufacturing and shipping.

Fleet Street stood in the mile between the two cities. This, in Shakespeare's day comprised largely of fields and orchards, with the ground sloping gently down to the banks of the Thames, but in Sweeney Todd's day it was a network of back alleys around Fleet Street itself.

Fleet Street was named after the Fleet Ditch whose filthy stinking waters ran down through Holborn along the path of what is now Farringdon Street and New Bridge Street, before it spewed its fetid contents into the River Thames around today's Blackfriars Bridge. The Fleet was covered over in 1737 to everyone's mutual relief. The many passages and alleyways which developed in the area were an ideal habitat for the nefarious types who inhabited the area, where the riff-raff lived cheek by jowl with more respectable lawyers (who were not yet considered respectable enough to practice in the city). The current newspaper and publishing industry had been carried on since Caxton's time in the area as Fleet Street had developed as a home of book publishing as well as a rendezvous for literary London.

The district also hosted certain services which Londoners needed but preferred to be kept at arms length and not 'in their own back yards'. It was, indeed, London's busiest and most lucrative Red Light district.

Not surprisingly the area attracted the rabble as well as the criminal fraternity, with several



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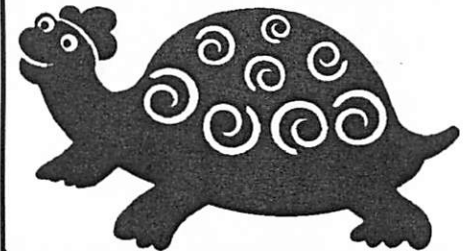
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up with the other corpses and unceremoniously dumped into a mass paupers grave.

Sweeney Todd survived that terrible winter on his wits, living the life of a guttersnipe. He was next heard of apprenticed to John Crook, a Cutler. His shop, with its sign bearing a pistol and the letter 'C' was in Great Turnstile, Holborn. Cutlers of the eighteenth century made many items, including tinder boxes, toothpick cases, gun



Sweeney Todd's world ; Late eighteenth century London as depicted by Hogarth.

hammers, gunpowder and cut throat razors. Two years later in 1770 when he was fourteen years old, Todd's apprenticeship was brought to an abrupt end when he was sentenced to five years imprisonment at Newgate for petty theft. Harsh as this seems today, he was lucky to escape with his life, for many crimes warranted hanging, including stealing a shilling as a pickpocket.

Whilst in Newgate Sweeney Todd fell into the company of another inmate - an old barber-surgeon named Plummer, serving ten years for embezzlement. Under Plummer's guidance he earned a few pence shaving other inmates and,

no doubt, pulling their teeth.

In 1775 he was released - a nineteen year old man with a profession learnt the hard way in prison. He was, however, a morose, bitter, and cruel man nursing a vengeful resentment against the society that firstly had him born into poverty, orphaned him and finally deprived him of his freedom.

His first need was to earn his daily bread and he joined the ranks of London's 'Flying Barbers' who set themselves up on street corners, markets or fairs to ply their trade. Five years later he had saved enough to open his first shop near Hyde Park Corner where he prospered until just before Christmas 1784. He was forced to flee the premises when he committed the first of his many murders; The Annual Register reported "... the barber, in the height of his frenzy, cut the young gent's throat from ear to ear and absconded ..."

He next surfaced in his famous premises at 186 Fleet Street where he hung out his sign bearing the words "Easy shaving for a penny, As good as you will find any"

From the time he opened his shop there abounded many tales in the newspapers and periodicals of the day concerning the disappearance without trace of so many people in the vicinity of Todd's barber shop. They were mainly strangers to the area and most had been reported as being seen with Todd prior to their disappearance.

Unlike the details in our play, where the barber's shop stands above the pishop, it is assumed that Mrs Lovett's shop was in nearby Bell Yard which was connected to Todd's establishment by an underground alleyway,

affluent and previously respectable areas, such as Covent Garden declining into disreputable ghettos. The areas nearby housed the second-hand clothing markets and tatters which traditionally attracted ravishers, cutpurses and pimps. Far worse than this was the area between Fleet Street and the Thames known as 'Alsatia' which was a favourite haunt of desperados, outcasts, murderers and convicts on the run.

If Sweeney Todd did exist, and it has been convincingly argued that he did, his world in and around Fleet Street would certainly have been fraught with gross injustice as well as being inhabited by the bent magistrates, beadles, sailors, guttersnipes, beggars without hope, quacks, fantastics and dubious asylum keepers - yes, and even Mrs Lovett, bent on making a living at whatever (and whoever's) expense in her eighteenth century equivalent of today's convenience food outlet!



Slums by the Fleet Ditch by Thomas Hosmer Shepherd, 1840

WHO WAS SWEENEY TODD?

"We all need bogey-men and he was bogier than most" Anna Pavord The Observer, 29th January 1979.

Over the centuries and in places as far flung as Morocco, London, Edinburgh, France and Germany there have been several tales of barbers who killed their customers, either to rob them of their clothing and valuables or, as is Todd's case, for more gruesome reasons.

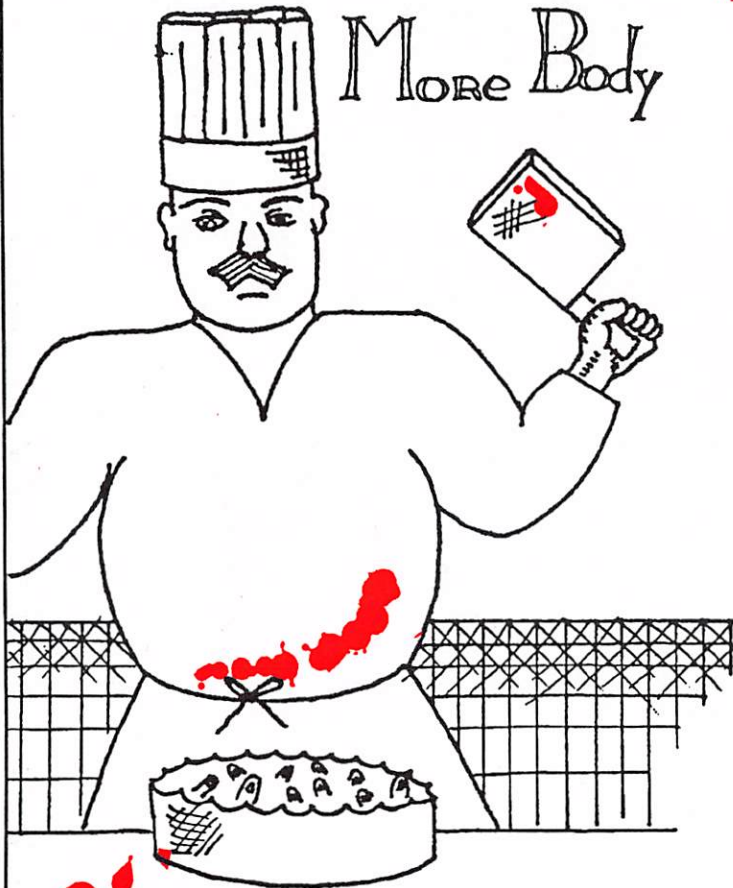
Sweeney Todd was born into abject poverty at either number 85, 87 or 89 Brick Lane, Stepney on 26th October 1756. The Spitalfields district of London into which he was born was "... a world where violence, disorder and brutal punishment were all a part of the normal life" wrote the historian Dorothy George in 1930. The area was, to a great extent, self contained, mainly due to the fact that the dangerous characters that dwelt there discouraged the casual visitor. A few yards to the South the fetid and diseased Fleet

Ditch spewed its filthy waste into the River Thames with its odious mixture of factory waste, household sewers and many open lavatories which abounded along its banks; giving it the reputation of the dirtiest river in Europe.

In 1768 a severe and prolonged winter hit London and with food and coal not only scarce but well beyond the pockets of the poor, many families simply froze to death in their scant rented rooms. One report tells of a shoemaker who froze to death actually sat at his stall.

Todd's parents reportedly spent their last money on gin and disappeared from the area, leaving the twelve year old Sweeney to fend for himself. What happened to them is not known; perhaps they too froze to death and their bodies piled

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SWEENEY TODD

THE DEMON BARBER OF
FLEET STREET

by Christopher Bond

Anthony Hope Paul Dodman
Sweeney Todd Geoff Whipp
A Beggar Woman Margaret Pope
Mrs Lovett Jan Stevenson
A Beadle Tony Willmet
Judge Turpin Joe Brooks
Tobias Ragg John Williams
A Balding Man Dave Williams
Alfredo Pirelli Richard Neal
Johanna Carolyn Hewitt
The Watch Martin Matthews
A Prisoner Christian Napier
A Young Stranger Tiffany Kenyon
Eliza Fogg Chrissie Wathen
A Carpenter Simon Jackson
A Greengrocer Daphne Young
A Flower Seller Muriel Brooks
A Milkmaid Rebecca Gunnell

Directed by Penny Scotford

Musical Director Chris Dowie

Designed by Geoff Stone

Fiona McDonald

Lighting Ian Taylor

Stage Manager Simon Jackson

Costume Roy Joseph

Wardrobe Ann Whiteside

Properties Eddy Colton

Hair & Make-up Sheila Smith

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