



The Rattigan

The Newsletter of
The Terence Rattigan Society

October 2018 Issue No. 26

Version

FLARE PATH



It's just over a month until Royal Central's presentation of *Flare Path* becomes the first student production aided in part by the Harold and Pegs French Award. It'll be directed by Lindsay Posner whose previous Rattigan outing was the well received *Winslow Boy* with Henry Goodman at the Old Vic in 2013.

After studying English Literature at university Lindsay graduated from the acting course at the

Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in 1984. He was associate director of the Royal Court Theatre from 1987 to 1992 where his production of *Death and the Maiden* won two Olivier Awards. After leaving the Court he has built a record of success in a series of revivals including *Relatively Speaking*, *Abigail's Party* and *Noises Off*.

Flare Path will be performed by BA (Hons) Acting students, working alongside students from the BA (Hons) Theatre Practice course.

On Saturday 24th November there will be a special reception at the school followed by a matinee performance.

Additionally the Society is producing a special booklet on Rattigan, his time in the RAF and his work concerning flying and flyers, which will be handed to all audience members at each performance.

A booking form has been sent to all members who are asked to reserve their places as soon as possible to ensure sufficient seats are available.

SEPARATE TABLES AND THE SLEEPING PRINCE ON TOUR 1955

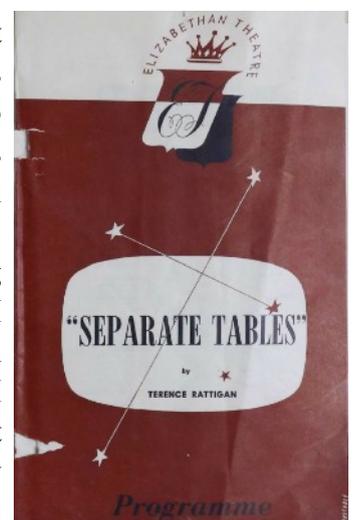
Did you know that *Separate Tables* toured overseas the year after it opened - 1955? No, neither did I until I came across some archive programmes from The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust who presented this and *The Sleeping Prince* down under a year before the New York transfer.

I don't see this tour mentioned explicitly in either of the biographies, though Michael Darlow does mention an Australian visit in that year, but I was most intrigued to find that Ralph Richardson took the lead in both.

When I was a young man Laurence Olivier and Ralph Richardson were often portrayed as rivals for the crown of 'leading actor of their generation' with

a nod to Gielgud but seldom anything as far as one could see to Guinness. Well that's how I seem to recall things.

Olivier did nothing for me at all. Gielgud I would love to have seen more of. Guinness I always enjoyed. But Richardson simply mesmerised me, and still does. Someone, it may





and its consequences. Richardson in his movie performances is uniquely self-knowing and able to take that self-knowledge off the screen and make it real for the audience – which one suspects would have made him an unsettling hero here. If indeed hero is the right word.

But it is in *Separate Tables* that one really wishes one could have seen him.

Heavy drinking self-destructive fallen political star John

have been Albert Finney, once said that all you wanted to do was reach out and hug Richardson such was the sympathy you felt for whatever predicament the play had placed him in at the time.

You even feel sorry for him struggling when the toils of his own devious petty criminality come back to haunt him in the little known film *On the Night of the Fire*. It's the same knowing and cunning bewilderment that makes his performance in Alvin Rakoff's TV production of *Heart to Heart* so satisfying to watch.

But as far as I can tell he never played in Rattigan on stage save for this tour where what can only be described as a star-studded cast took both *The Sleeping Prince* and *Separate Tables* to both Australia and New Zealand. It made me wonder just what we might have missed.

I've written before in this journal about Olivier's somnambulant performance in *The Prince and the Showgirl* where he is played off the screen by Richard Wattis with additional scene stealing by Sybil Thorndike but the notion of Richardson as the Regent is thought provoking. One imagines that mobile face and that unique voice making hay with the moral and ethical ambiguities of the play and of his own behaviour

Malcolm in *The Table by the Window* could have been written for him – and how well you fancy he might have filled the shoes of this troubled soul who may not deserve but must have our sympathy for this wonderful play to work.

In *Table Number Seven*, though, one can almost hear that wonderful God-given delivery of Major Pollock's admissions and his desperation to be part of something; anything; anybody. Pollock is one of Rattigan's greatest creations but you have to believe that the man is somehow capable of real redemption for his triumph over the Railton-Bells of the world to really work. Richardson, one suspects, could bring it off, maybe because in terms of personal shyness

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THE AUSTRALIAN ELIZABETHAN THEATRE TRUST

RALPH RICHARDSON	SYBIL THORNDIKE	MERIEL FORBES	LEWIS CASSON
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in TWO PLAYS by TERENCE RATTIGAN

Separate Tables
by arrangement with STEPHEN MITCHELL

<p>TABLE BY THE WINDOW</p> <p>Mabel LORNA FORBES Lady Matheson WINIFRED GREEN Mrs. Railton-Bell SYBIL THORNDIKE Miss Meacham LILY MOORE Doreen JACQUELINE KOTT Mr. Fowler LEWIS CASSON Mrs. Sherkland MERIEL FORBES Miss Cooper DAPHNE NEWTON Mr. Stratton HARRY STARLING Miss Tanner JUNE COLLIS Mr. Malcolm RALPH RICHARDSON</p>	<p>TABLE NUMBER SEVEN</p> <p>Mrs. Stratton JUNE COLLIS Mr. Stratton HARRY STARLING Major Pollock RALPH RICHARDSON Mr. Fowler LEWIS CASSON Miss Cooper DAPHNE NEWTON Mrs. Railton-Bell SYBIL THORNDIKE Miss Railton-Bell MERIEL FORBES Lady Matheson WINIFRED GREEN Miss Meacham LILY MOORE Mabel LORNA FORBES Doreen JACQUELINE KOTT</p>
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— TIME: WINTER —

SCENE 1: DINING ROOM — DINNER.
 SCENE 2: LOUNGE — AFTER DINNER.
 SCENE 3: DINING ROOM — BREAKFAST.

— TIME: SUMMER —

SCENE 1: LOUNGE — AFTER TEA.
 SCENE 2: DINING ROOM — DINNER.
 Duo Pianists: Eunice Lloyd and Jean Chartres.

The action of both plays takes place in the Lounge and Dining Room of the Beauregard Private Hotel, near Bournemouth.

The Plays Directed by LIONEL HARRIS Decor by MICHAEL WEIGHT



The first night of *The Sleeping Prince* on the 1955 tour.

he wouldn't have to do much acting.

One can imagine Sybil Thorndike making a monstrous Railton-Bell but apparently initially her performance so reeked with her dislike of the character she was taken to task by her son John Casson for robbing the performance of the honesty required for a real villain. She modified things by all accounts with great success.

While it's true that I would also have treasured the experience of seeing Eric Portman in *Separate Tables*, at least to me, there's surely not the inevitability of casting that comes with Richardson. So interesting is the idea that on re-reading the plays recently I could hear him in my head.

About the director Lionel Harris I can find little save a listing of some minor film appearances as an actor and a list of BBC drama producer and director credits including a number of well-remembered Wednesday Plays. He worked at the Bristol Old Vic and Sheffield as well as with the Arts Council and a production of his own adaptation of Sheridan's *The Duenna* with a new musical score by Julian Slade did transfer to the Westminster Theatre.

After the tour Nola Millar the New Zealander critic wrote: "The impression that remains strongest of this visit was our joy in the sheer professionalism of it all - a reminder of how seldom in our theatre going do we have the chance to watch craftsmen who are masters of their craft."

It was said of Arthur Lowe that those who missed his stage work missed the best of him and these rather tatty archive programmes found on line make one regret once again the ephemeral nature of the theatrical experience.

Each night is a first night and also a last. That's the glory and the pity of it.



The Terence Rattigan Society

President: David Suchet CBE
Vice-Presidents: Michael Darlow, Lord Fellowes
 Dr Holly Hill, Greta Scacchi, Geoffrey Wansell

<p><i>Chairman</i></p> <p><i>Membership Secretary</i></p> <p><i>Treasurer</i></p> <p><i>Editor</i></p> <p><i>Media Liaison</i></p> <p><i>Events Secretary</i></p> <p><i>Webmaster</i></p> <p><i>Theatre Liaison</i></p> <p><i>Drama School Liaison</i></p> <p><i>US Representative:</i></p> <p><i>Secretary & RAF Liaison</i></p>	<p>Barbara Longford</p> <p>Diana Scotney</p> <p>Andrew Kenyon</p> <p>Giles Cole</p> <p>Roger Mills</p> <p>Susan Cooper</p> <p>Stephen Bradley</p> <p>Michael Wheatley-Ward</p> <p>Professor Michael Gaunt</p> <p>Dr Holly Hill</p> <p>Gp Capt Clive Montellier OBE</p>
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IT DOESN'T 'COSTA' LOT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Even if we weren't funding *Flare Path* I'd have been along to one of the performances. I visit as many student productions as I can and, despite some inevitable variation in quality, it's invariably an enjoyable experience.

If nothing else witnessing the sheer joie de vivre that goes with late adolescence I often in idle moments wish myself back to, say, 1974.

I picture myself happily dragging on my Players Number 10 stirring the size bucket ready to slap another coat onto a freshly made flat. Perhaps before heading on down to Strand's Lowten (Manchester) store to hire a couple of Patt 765s billed to the college of course. I used to say I'd go back and do the three years again without a second thought – and for a long time that was true.

But be a drama student in 2018? Now that's a different kettle of size as they say.

When did this, nostalgia induced, longing change? Well as it happens, and you'll see why I'm writing this now, it was at an early TRS event. One of the very earliest I think, the master class by Thea Sharrock at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama which still stands out as an highlight.

Anyway, after welcoming us to the school, the Principal, Gavin Henderson, made a pitch for the institution's Pivot Club - an organisation where members' subs and gifts go to fund scholarships and bursaries to help students pay their way. Pay their way? My ears pricked up. I'd never had to pay a brass farthing bar buying a few books. Yes I'd done a Masters between 1997 and 1999 but a few hundred quid had covered it and I think things like tuition fees for undergrads were in their infancy. For me everything else had been on a full grant.

Anyway back to Gavin. Warming to his task he outlined the burden of tuition fees and the costs of living in London comparing it with his youthful experience which was very much like mine.

This was news. I'd no direct familial experience of modern student finance but I was certain of one thing. Go back to 1972 when I was embarking on Higher Education and faced with tuition fees of £718 (that's what £9000 today was worth then) plus building up other debt and my parents simply would not have allowed me to go. It wasn't the cash; though they weren't rich I went without nothing. No they had a horror of debt and credit which thankfully they

passed on to me.

In 2018 their view would be different, we live in a different world, but for families of limited means setting an eighteen-year-old up with the gear to start would be the same struggle and the availability of a bursary for, say, the set of course books might soften the blow.

So schools like Central now work to raise their own resources to assist students. At Central it's through the Pivot Club of which I am a member. I got in touch the very day after the event and was signed up by Meg Ryan their Head of Individual Giving & Alumni Relations with alacrity.

I asked Meg to tell me how important the club is. She was clear: "Funds raised by members of the Pivot Club are crucially important for the School because they are one of the few gifts which are unrestricted. This means that Pivot Club donations enable Central to respond quickly to the greatest area of financial need, whatever it might be. It also means that each gift made is so very, very important."

Now Central aren't alone in this. LAMDA have a similar scheme and Lyndel Harrison, Director of Development & Alumni Relations was also candid about the place of such support: "As a leader in performance arts training, LAMDA has a responsibility to reflect the world we live in, offering pathways to our training to all people regardless of income or background."

"Our scholarships and patrons programmes give the public the opportunity to change lives by supporting performers and practitioners at the very start of their careers – it is only with this support that we are able to diversify our student cohort and fully enrich the professional industry."

It's not an expensive commitment either. £5 a week, the cost of an overpriced latte and a bikkie turns into £260 in a year - enough to fund the basic equipment for a theatre arts student as with gift aid it's £312. OK it's not a lot, but being a drama school student in the backstage crafts is dear- you have to buy everything yourself.

I've been 'Pivoting' since 2012 and it's very rewarding. You can start at Central for £6 a month; at LAMDA it's £12.50. I am sure pretty well all drama schools run something along these lines. Why not check into it and give up that one cuppa a week?

Roger Mills

FROM THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting took place at Doggett's on Blackfriars Bridge in London on 13th October. The formal agenda was followed by a rehearsed reading of Lynda Strudwick's entry for the TRS New Play Award, The Rattigan Affair, after which members partook of a buffet lunch. Aside from hearing the Chairman's report and receiving the accounts for the last financial year (see panel below) the secretary outlined a number of minor changes to the constitution designed to clarify the position of honorary members and president and vice president. The existing committee was elected en bloc. During Any Other Business members discussed the French Award and how it would work going forward and the importance of recruiting new members.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Since our AGM last November here at Doggett's, when we watched a rehearsed reading of Roy Chatfield's second prize-winning play 'Going Back', we have had three Society events.

The **first** was on Saturday 17th February, when we visited Broadstairs to see the first professional production of the TRS Award-Winning play *The Onion at the End* by Roy Kendall, directed by Michael Friend. This took place at the Sarah Thorne Theatre in Broadstairs; a professional community theatre run by Committee member Michael Wheatley-Ward. Fifty members of the society travelled to Kent for the performance and our President, David Suchet, attended together with Vice Presidents – Michael Darlow, Julian Fellowes, Greta Scacchi and Geoffrey Wansell. This was an extremely enjoyable occasion which David Suchet summed up by saying he thought Terence Rattigan would be very proud of this production.

The **second** event of the year was on Saturday 12th May, when we visited the Richmond Theatre to see a production of *The Winslow Boy*, directed by Rachel Kavanaugh. Many Society members thought this was the finest production they had seen of this play. Aden Gillett was particularly outstanding as Arthur Winslow. Thirty members attended and we went on to have supper at The Duke public house afterwards.

Sadly I was unable to attend the **third** event of the year, which was our Annual Birthday Dinner at the Oxford & Cambridge Club. We were fortunate that Professor John Bertolini, author of *The Case for*

Terence Rattigan: Playwright travelled over from Vermont at his own expense to be our Guest Speaker on this occasion. This event was reviewed in the July edition of the newsletter and more of his speech will appear in this edition.

Professor Bertolini was recommended to us as a Guest Speaker by Vice President, Dr Holly Hill. I had invited Holly to address us this year, but she said she would prefer to come over next year because it would coincide with a special birthday. So, we shall have the opportunity of hearing Holly speak at our Annual Birthday Dinner in 2019 at The Garrick Club. The exact date will be published as soon as possible.

The next event of the year will be on Saturday 24th November at The Royal Central School of Speech & Drama, to watch a production of *Flare Path* which has been sponsored by the Society, from the French Fund, donated by Dr. Holly Hill. Holly is travelling from Texas to see this and will formally hand over the donation to the Principal of the School, TRS member, Professor Gavin Henderson. The Society has prepared a special booklet to accompany this production. We are aiming to use this booklet to attract a wider membership for our own Society from the many members of the School's Pivot Club and others attending. Please save the date and a booking form will be distributed shortly. Finally, on behalf of everyone on the Committee, I should like to thank you all for your support.

Barbara Longford

The Terence Rattigan Society Balance Sheet 2017-2018

Balance as at 1 August 2017	£13048.71
Receipts	
Membership Fees & Donations	£3178.62
Event Charges	£6394.00
Total Income for year	£22621.33
Payments	
Administration Expenses (Note 1)	£1377.54
Printing	£866.41
Public Liability Insurance	£140.00
Event Costs (Note 2)	£7365.85
Refunds & Charges	£45.00
The Terence Rattigan Award	£4511.52
Total Expenditure for year	£14306.32
Balance as at 31 July 2018	£8315.01

Notes

1. Includes some postage, stationery and some administration costs relating to events.
2. Includes £360 payment in advance for Flare Path event and non-recurring cost of a play award related event for which competition entrants were not charged.

THE RATTIGAN AFFAIR

Lynda Strudwick's entry for the new play award *The Rattigan Affair* was given a Michael Darlow-directed reading at the AGM. Here's a summary for those who could not attend.

The plot concerns a young journalist, Lydia, who is slated to write a feature on Rattigan but knows nothing about him. Fortuitously her late grandmother was a fan and so Lydia can have a rifle through the old girl's collection of Rattigan memorabilia, at the same time one supposes as going through the pretence of doing some clearing out. While doing this research Lydia climbs a ladder to reach some books, falls off, happily only knocking herself unconscious rather than into the next world. She comes round to be confronted by an apparition who turns out to be Terence Rattigan himself.

Once the introductions are over Rattigan is faced with an attractive young lady who is down to write about something of which she knows nothing. He offers to help. How? Simple. By introducing her to some of his characters.

First up is Ronnie Winslow, then we confront Major Pollock and Mrs Railton-Bell from *Separate Tables*. Hester Collier and his controversial fictional

creation Aunt Edna come next before we complete the supernatural trip with Taplow and Crocker-Harris.

Seems simple doesn't it? And yes it is an old hackneyed trope but here it does hang together and work as a conceit. Amongst highlights are the scales falling from Aunt Edna's eyes about the sexual leanings of her hero, the real offence of Major Pollock, a knock-about appearance by John Osborne and Taplow's (or indeed Rattigan's) inability to tell whether he had an ulterior motive. Throughout the play Lydia and Terence talk about the problems of love – does Lydia really love the wrong man?

Considering that there was barely time for one run through the cast did a marvellous job, with the part of Lydia being taken by Rosie Baker, continuing something of a theme of this edition by being an ex Royal Central acting student.

The Cast

Lydia	Rosie Baker
Terry	Giles Cole
Ronnie Winslow	Martin Amherst Lock
Major Pollock	Derek Tobias
Voice of Judge	Leslie du Cane
Mrs Railton-Bell	Barbara Longford
John Osborne	Anthony Campling
Hester Collyer	Alison du Cane
Aunt Edna	Jane Fenton
John Taplow	Esop Evard
Andrew Crocker-Harris	Anthony Maister

INTRODUCING SUSAN COOPER

The newest member of our committee writes... My first experience of the Rattigan Society was when I attended the birthday dinner with some friends (who are members of the Society) at the Garrick Club about 3 years ago. It was such a wonderful evening meeting lovely, interesting people in a fantastic venue so I immediately joined the Society to have the opportunity to learn more about Rattigan and experience his work with knowledgeable people.

Probably like many of my generation, my first contact with Rattigan was reading *The Winslow Boy* at school which I remember as being one of the few plays I actually enjoyed reading at the time. More recently I have enjoyed some of the recent plays that have been on in London and elsewhere including *The Deep Blue Sea*, *Flare Path*, *The Browning Version* and *The Winslow Boy*.

I have lived in Tunbridge Wells, Kent for many years and have always travelled to London to work as a lawyer. I used to work for a large London law firm dealing with UK immigration, work permits and

nationality issues but now work for a small, niche US firm advising on American visas, work permits, nationality etc.

Outside of work, my interests include a great love of literature and the theatre. I have been Secretary of the Anthony Trollope Society for a few years now and enjoy meeting up with fellow Trollopians to read and discuss his work as well as going on Trollope themed walks and many visits to places associated with Trollope and his books including a trip to Prague this autumn. I am part of the organising team for Bodies From The Library which is an annual conference held at the British Library to celebrate the Golden Age of Crime Fiction. I am also on the Committee of the Margery Allingham Society as Events Coordinator and am currently arranging a weekend convention in Colchester for next April. I have always loved going to the theatre both in London and locally and will go to see almost anything. I volunteer at Trinity Theatre in Tunbridge Wells both as an usher and a Duty Manager which gives me a fantastic opportunity to see a wide range of theatre, comedy, music and films.

CHANGING VIEWS ON RATTIGAN

The turning point [*in student attitudes to Rattigan*] became evident to me when teaching *Flare Path* - a play I thought to be a masterpiece upon first reading. I noticed the change of attitude when I was discussing the scene where Teddy breaks down in front of his wife, Patricia, and reveals the part of himself he has hidden from everyone including his wife. He tries to convey the feelings he has whenever he goes on a mission in which he bears the responsibility for seeing that his men return alive. Teddy tries to express the fear he experiences and the connection he feels to his men. He says to Patricia, "I'm their captain." And then he repeats the last two words, "Their captain" - a separate sentence that is as understated as it can be and therefore implies so much about the great burden of being responsible for their lives.

Henceforth whenever I taught Rattigan, the students responded intensely, particularly to the emotions of the plays especially where they were conveyed through Rattigan's highly wrought language of understatement and implication.

By the time I last taught Rattigan in a seminar with Shaw and Stoppard, the students had come to love Rattigan. Now I would like to share with you some remarks taken from the students' evaluations of the course: The first is from a Chinese who cancels student who viewed the plays as 'weak tea': "I absolutely adore all of Rattigan's plays." From another student: "These plays have moved me, excited me, made me cry so many times, and made me laugh out loud. I will be re-reading these plays for the rest of my life. Even more importantly, I feel as if I have been able to more deeply engage with the full range of human experience, triumph, sorrow, and questioning because of these plays and our discussions about them."

I showed the students three films of Rattigan plays: Asquith's *The Winslow Boy* and *The Browning Version* and Delbert Mann's *Separate Tables*. With each film the students were highly engaged, vocal in their reactions to all of Rattigan's superb theatrical

moments. They applauded vigorously at the end; some of them had tears in their eyes. Applause and tears are rarities after required screenings at Middlebury College..

I end with a personal anecdote about a recent production of *Flare Path* at Middlebury College. For several years I had been after my friend and colleague, Richard Romagnoli, to put on a production of Rattigan's *Flare Path* because it is such a moving and beautifully crafted play and equally because I thought Richard would make a grand success with it. Meanwhile, Richard asked me to suggest three Rattigan plays for him to consider, and said he would pick one to do.

However, I was set on *Flare Path*, partly because I was dying to see the Count's silent return

and how the audience would respond—I was not disappointed in their reaction, gasps of delight when they realized it was the Count making his silent entrance.

At a certain point in our negotiations, Richard balked at the difficult job casting the play would be, and he wrote to me that he had decided finally not to do *Flare Path*. I panicked at this setback, and I stooped to one of the lowest and most shameful things I have ever done. At the time I was about to undergo some heart tests as he well knew and like a good friend was much concerned about, and I wrote Richard the following e-mail: "If you are absolutely against doing *Flare Path*, I guess I could settle for *French Without Tears*. Of course with my terrible heart condition I may not live long enough ever to see a production of *Flare Path* anyway, but don't feel bad, it won't be on your conscience, and I don't want you to feel guilty! Enjoy your life after I'm gone which can't be too far off now!"

I gambled that with his big heart Richard would relent; he did, and the result was a splendid *Flare Path*. My only defense for such a shameless appeal is that all is fair in love and war--and theatre. Thank you.



Concluding the talk given by Professor John A Bertolini at our annual dinner

THE RATTIGAN FAMILY PLOT - AN UPDATE

Clive Montellier writes... Regular readers of this journal will recall that it was brought to our attention last year that the Rattigan family plot in Kensal Green Cemetery was in poor condition, overgrown and with deteriorating stonework. Moreover, there was no mention of either Terence Rattigan's mother, or of Sir Terence himself, whose ashes are interred there.

Of course, our immediate thought was the Society might get involved, either in providing some voluntary labour to tidy the plot up, in fundraising for more structural repairs, or even the addition of a plaque drawing the attention of visitors to the link with one of Britain's great playwrights. However, to do so without the permission of the registered owners of the grave might prove embarrassing or even render us liable for its enduring maintenance.

Society member Norman Home kindly offered to do some investigation for us and, with the assistance of the General Cemetery Company, was able to ascertain that the corporate owner of the grave was Messrs Coutts & Co, no doubt as the result of their execution of the will of Sir William Henry Rattigan MP, the first member of the family interred there in 1904. Sadly, whilst still in the banking business (although as an arm of the Royal Bank of Scotland), repeated approaches have elicited only that Coutts' record keeping does not appear to extend to graves registered in their name.

That leaves us at something of an impasse as, in the absence of any acceptance of responsibility by



Coutts, for us to embark on any work could be construed as accepting *de facto* ownership, even if the Cemetery Company would allow us to. We need also to be mindful that Sir Terence's own will, as confirmed by Trust Representative Lee Penhaligan, indicated no wishes as to his last resting place; hence for us to add a plaque to his family plot could be quite presumptuous.

In the meantime, Norman and other members living in the vicinity of the Cemetery are keeping an eye on the grave's condition and we hope that Messrs Coutts will find time in the business of wealth management to grace us with a reply to our correspondence.

The editor adds... in this respect the General Cemetery Co find themselves in the same position of many burial authorities.

I worked for a monumental mason in the summer of 1972, 46 years ago I am stunned to realise, and with him worked in many cemeteries with plots that had not been tended or even visited for decades, some of which even then were in need of attention - and many of serious repair.

Short of making such things safe - which is pretty well all most authorities can afford to do - there is little that can be done if the grave owner cannot be found. Especially if the plot is a freehold property.

