

# The Rattigan

The Newsletter of  
The Terence Rattigan Society

ISSUE NO. 19 DECEMBER 2016

## Version

## Farewell to our own Princess

Our beloved President, known to most of us as 'Jean' passed away peacefully on the morning of 14<sup>th</sup> December after suffering two strokes. A personal loss for her family and a huge blow for the Society; not only was she a remarkably active and enthusiastic President, but also one of our last personal contacts with Sir Terence himself. The Princess's presence graced so many of our events, she supported our initiatives and, despite her frailty even attended the launch of The TRS Award, in January. Sadly this was to prove her last appearance amongst us.

But this is not a time for great sadness, because her life was such an amazingly accomplished and happy one and as her dear friend Julian Fellowes remarked to me: "*Jean has had a wonderful and exciting life, a great beauty, a great wit, and at the centre of almost everything into extreme old age*".

I first met Princess Galitzine on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2011, through Michael Darlow, just before the inaugural committee meeting of our Society, formed in the centenary year. As members will surely know, the young and famous fashion model Jean Dawnay became a close friend, hostess and muse for Terence Rattigan. She invited me to tea in Eaton Square and from the first moment I saw her and heard her rich warm voice, I was enchanted. One of the many marvellous things about her was that despite her beauty, style and glamour and her extensive achievements, she remained totally unpretentious and down to earth. I'll always remember her telling me



On the occasion of her 90th birthday party at 100 Cornwall Gardens

about chairing a meeting at her home to launch 'The Prince George Galitzine Memorial Library' in 1994 and that many of the ladies attending had been to the hairdresser specially for the occasion which they had had thought would be primarily a social one. Jean was bemused and firmly pointed out to them that they were all there to get down to work.

This realistic attitude to life may have been born of a difficult early start; Jean was a self-made woman who wasn't born with a silver spoon and although she did not speak of it, her early life had at least two severe setbacks. Her mother died when she was four and at the same age she was treated by the pioneer plastic surgeon Sir Harold Delf Gillies MD. I quote

from an article about him by CJ Williams:

*"Another patient, Jean Dawnay (later to be Princess George Galitzine) as a four-year-old had the upper half of her face coated with boiling tar and bitumen in a road-side accident. Fearing permanent damage to the exposed wound Jean was taken to Gillies's practice in Harley Street to be treated. The operation was a complete success, featured in The Lancet, and, in a script redolent of a Hollywood melodrama, Jean would go on to become a leading model for Christian Dior, Jacques Fath and marry a Russian prince."*

The young Jean Dawnay had tremendous verve and adventurous spirit. She ran away from school when she was 12, and at 14 wanted to be a missionary in Tibet and also a famous opera singer. / **Cont. on back page...**

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## The Terence Rattigan Society

Vice-Presidents: Michael Darlow, Greta Scacchi, David Suchet CBE, Geoffrey Wansell

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Treasurer	Andrew Kenyon	Newsletter Editor	Giles Cole
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Editor's note: Any views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual author and do not necessarily represent the views of The Terence Rattigan Society or its Committee.

### Denis Moriarty INTRODUCES Giles Cole

Giles Cole is a man of the theatre through and through; treading the boards, writing for stage and radio, creating and producing events. He remains essentially and refreshingly modest and convivial, an enabler who shares his talents generously in the service of others. He is the eldest of seven children of academic parents - his mother conscientiously sworn to the Official Secrets Act, worked at the celebrated wartime Bletchley Park, and his father, a double Blue at Oxford, was a successful barrister before becoming a distinguished Garter King of Arms.

The family lived in rural Surrey whence Giles became a boarder at Dulwich College, hinting that there he was something of a long-haired 1960s rebel, and responding more to the dramatic opportunities on offer than the rigours of the Oxbridge class. He graduated from an Attendant Lord in the annual Shakespeare to an acclaimed Sir Politic Would-be in *Volpone*. This provided the platform for entrance to the Webber-Douglas Academy in 1969, where Antony Sher was an illustrious contemporary. Sixteen years in rep and regional tours followed, notably in *Arturo Ui* and *Little Malcolm and His Struggle Against the Eunuchs* with the Contact Theatre in Manchester, *Equus* and *King Lear* in Lancaster, Shaw's *Misalliance* in Leatherhead, and Priestley's *I Have Been Here Before* and Ayckbourn's *The Norman Conquests* on tour. He played Edmund Swettenham in *A Murder is Announced* for Peter Saunders at the Vaudeville Theatre and (as an understudy) both male roles in *Private Lives* at the Duchess. It wasn't all classy stuff, though—for a season in North Wales he had been auditioned over the telephone and engaged as second juvenile lead; the main lead, similarly auditioned, turned out to have a double life as a drag artist.



In an uncertain profession mortgage and marriage often consorted together and it was in 1982/3, in a West End run - the seemingly everlasting farce *No Sex Please, We're British* - that Giles met Lynne, the daughter of a theatre producer, Charles Ross, who had the reputation for casting over the snooker table. The wedding reception was held at the Garrick Club, where six years later Giles also became a member, popular and much respected to this day, where he has responsibility for Events, and in 2014 produced a stylish weekend celebration of that prestigious club's 150th anniversary.

In the mid-1980s the arrival of two children prompted a more predictable lifestyle, and he joined a friend and fellow actor in launching a production company specialising in corporate presentations and engaging celebrities such as Jonathan Ross, Jack Dee and Graham Norton. Giles wrote all the scripts (though not their gags), making all the links and intro's match their individual style.

Giles had begun writing for the theatre while still on stage, and it was with radio he first made his mark - *Ancestors*, a play which drew on research and influences that stemmed from his heraldic father. Six further radio plays followed. As a young man Giles had joined his father's livery company, the Scriveners; in 2003 he became its Master, and later, at a crucial moment, its Clerk, a post he holds to this day.

Geoffrey Wansell was revising his widely read Rattigan biography for paperback when he asked Giles to read the proofs; Giles became absorbed in the trajectory of Rattigan's success, decline and revival, and the tensions of the private life, and out of this arose Giles' most accomplished work to date, *The Art of Concealment* - which played to critical acclaim and

appreciative audiences in Brighton and London. *The Heart of Things* followed in 2015, and the TRS were there, as they were for *The Dover Road*—a neglected AA Milne piece Giles produced in 2016—for all these occasions in full enthusiastic force.

We know Giles, gratefully and personally, for his unstinting work as editor of this newsletter and as a mainstay of our Society. It's a privilege and a delight to count him as our friend and fellow-enthusiast. ☞

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## 'A charmed life' - a tribute

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Over the fifty or more years - although with considerable gaps - that I knew Jean Dawnay/Galitzine it seemed as though she lived a charmed life, soaring above the scene of our sorrow "*Where we poor mortals, built of common clay, Drudge through the functions of our humdrum day.*" She had been everywhere, met everyone, had been admired by all, and had delighted them, turning down careers in film and theatre which would have represented a lifetime achievement to others, and "*with perfect savoir faire reigned as the Queen of Eaton Square*".

Were there though, we wonder, any dark sides to this brilliant fairy-princess existence, "*When all that much-enjoyed applause and laughter had died*" like Sir Terence himself in his latter days? We never heard of them; let us imagine in our memories that they never existed and that we all met once in our lives, as seemed to be the case, one piece of floating gossamer.

*So, Princess, at the end of earthly things,  
While waiting, in the shadows, in the wings,  
Please know, before that heavenly curtain parts,  
You're lit and downstage centre in our hearts.* ☞

**Adrian Brown**

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## 'How will they do it?'

**Hon Treasurer Andrew Kenyon reports  
on a Winslow Boy in Notting Hill,  
some fine Italian fayre—and the AGM**

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The Society held its Annual General Meeting on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> November and this was preceded by a visit to the Ladbroke Players' production of *The Winslow Boy* at Notting Hill. Having directed this society in Rattigan myself it was something of a 'homecoming' to see them in action again and there

was excitement a-plenty in wondering '*How they will do it?*' Well...in my opinion, this was one of the best offerings The Ladbroke Players have staged. Alison du Cane – herself a TRS member – directed an excellent production where everything struck just the right note. Immediately we saw a nervous and vulnerable Ronnie entering as the lights went up, through to the touching closing scene between Kate and Sir Robert, it was evident Alison had done her homework.

The church does not allow for big sets with all the trimmings and the simplicity of her staging together with close audience contact made the play so intimate that one never felt the play was dragging (some productions I have seen have, sadly, tended to do so).

A strong cast with fine attention to costumes – the provocative hat was exactly right – good lighting, efficient scene changes and clear, well pronounced diction all came together perfectly. Special mention must be made of the actors Misia Butler (Ronnie), Dan Draper (Sir Robert) and Elspeth North (Katherine). The interrogation scene – so well known – had me on the edge of my seat and a quick glance around at this point showed a spellbound audience.

Alison also teased out the humour in the play which struck just the right balance of relief when required. A really superb staging and congratulations must go to all the Ladbroke Players (this production follows *The Browning Version* & *Harlequinade* and *Separate Tables* over the last five years) for flying the Rattigan flag so magnificently.

Repairing to the Mediterraneo Restaurant on Kensington Park Road, a small but select band of members enjoyed fine Italian fayre whilst the AGM was presided over by our genial Secretary, Clive Montellier ('Monty'). Reports were offered by the Membership Secretary and the Chairman recalled events over the past twelve months and looked forward to the exciting year ahead as we move towards the climax of the TRS Award.

The accounts balanced and were proposed, seconded and accepted (*phew say I!*) and the Committee was returned unaltered and unopposed. So having reviewed the last twelve months we're on song for another year of important events taking our message of Terry's work to the wider world and days like this show us why we're doing it! ☞



# The Rattigan sun shines in Bath

*Paddy Briggs reviews a recent Rattigan revival*

Terence Rattigan once wrote to John Osborne “*Whatever you do... don't write what they expect you to write*”, advice which the latter certainly followed. And so, of course, did Rattigan himself. *While The Sun Shines*, which a merry bunch of the Society's members saw at its penultimate performance at the Theatre Royal, Bath in June is something of a curiosity. It was Rattigan's longest running West End success and yet has hardly been performed since. It is high comedy bordering on farce, something it shares with Noel Coward's *Present Laughter*, which immediately preceded it in Bath this summer. This was a coincidence, I think, but to see the work of two greats in succession with comedies both of which premiered in 1943 was rather illuminating. The people of London had suffered terribly for three years and no doubt wanted something to cheer them up. The two plays do that wonderfully well. Rattigan himself later said “*I certainly set out to try to create some purely escapist laughter for those dark days of the war*”.

Rattigan had had critical and commercial success with his RAF play *Flare Path* in 1942. It is a moment frozen in time with the stresses of war, of relationships, of privation and the sheer awfulness of knowing that for every bombing mission there was a 50% risk that the aircraft and its crew would not return safely. There is some gallows humour and plenty of RAF slang and jargon. But it does have a “happy ending” – Rattigan didn't want, in August 1942, his audience leaving the theatre in gloom. *While The Sun Shines* approaches the “cheering up” task more directly. By late 1943 the war had turned in the Allies' favour and perhaps the theatre of the time was permitted, as with *Present Laughter*, to be firmly comic again! *While The Sun Shines* is Rattigan writing not “*what they expect you to write*” but more what the audience might have expected from Ben Travers or a dramatised PG Wodehouse story.

Rattigan's biographer Geoffrey Wansell said “*Nothing is ever as it seems in a Rattigan play*” but is there concealment in *While The Sun Shines* – are there hidden depths or is it indeed “purely escapist laughter”? I think the latter. Director Christopher Luscombe told us after



Rob Heaps in *While The Sun Shines*. Photo: Tristram Kenton

the performance that the play is “not a slow vehicle” and revealed to us the extent that the staging developed in rehearsals and previews. This is, I think, in part because the play has been so rarely performed. The recent National Theatre production of *The Deep Blue Sea* was the opposite to what Luscombe faced – the play and film are so familiar that

the director perhaps had to find something new to say – which I think she did. For Luscombe the first challenge was to introduce the play to most of us as we had no preconceived idea about it. (It does not even appear in any of the four volumes of *The Collected Plays*).

The revival of *Present Laughter* was generally well received though some charged it with snobbery and elitism. The same charge could be aimed at *While the Sun Shines* with its Albany location, its upper class characters and its officer class jokes. Mulvaney, the American, has a rather deferential and clichéd attitude to the Earl of Harpenden though the latter's obvious incompetence as a sailor is clever satire. There is also a tinge of misogyny – Mabel Crum is an archetypal “tart with a heart” and Lady Elizabeth's attitude to her puts her in her place – “*Mabel Crum. But she's awful... even Daddy knows her*”. “Daddy” (nicely played by the ever-green Michael Cochrane) is the Duke of Ayr and Stirling and has a similar view of women as his future son-in-law. If Mulvaney is a central casting American and the Duke a central casting toff then the Frenchman Lieutenant Colbert is also a stereotype. He is a charmer “*You have in your eyes a joy, a desire, a voluptuous flame of life, that will not be quenched*.” He says to Elizabeth “*... one day you will find a lover worthy of those eyes*”.

Both *Present Laughter* and *While The Sun Shines* are comedies about sex. Garry Essendine and many in his entourage are libertines and so are Bobby Harpenden, Mulvaney, the Duke and especially Colbert. The Lord Chamberlain protested at the explicitness of the first draft but Rattigan took up the cudgels calling it a “comedy of character not of situation”. Here I think the times in which it was first produced helped the play

survive with few cuts. The somewhat frivolous approach to sex that underpins the play and the slightly improbable mistake that Mulvaney makes in thinking Elizabeth is Mabel Crum are risqué but then England, and especially London, had a more relaxed attitude to sex during the war and the play reflects this. Add in the different morals of a Frenchman (*"A man can keep a hundred mistresses and still maintain a happy and successful marriage"*) and an American (*"Strictly between ourselves I got a soft spot ... for babes who look like you"*) and you have a not over-serious mirror being held up to those tense and, if not debauched, slightly decadent times.

While *The Sun Shines* is an entertainment at the extreme comic end of the Rattigan legacy. Christopher Luscombe and an excellent cast did it justice - but to bill it as a "masterpiece" as the Theatre Royal Bath did, goes way too far. It was very much a play for its time and as times have moved on it is not entirely a surprise that it has been rarely revived. It was a play for the Aunt Ednas of 1943 - her successors seventy years on might be a bit puzzled by it. ✨

## The Sound Barrier

**Clive Montellier reports on an outing to the Cinema Museum**

The seeds of our December event lay in our first visit to the Cinema Museum when a clip from the one and only film outing of our President in the 1958 film *Wonderful Things*, showed, in the same scene, actress Liz Fraser in one of her early film roles. A later reading of Liz's autobiography revealed that she had twice appeared in Rattigan plays. An invitation to take part in a Society event was enthusiastically received, and so your Secretary found himself in the privileged position of interviewing Liz in front of some twenty Society members on our return visit to the Cinema Museum, preceded by a convivial lunch at a local Kennington bistro.

With a long career in a wide range of roles both on screen and stage, Liz has a fount of memories and we were keen to explore her dramatic roles which have been somewhat overshadowed by her place at the heart of a golden age of British film comedy. An astounding body of work covers everything from the birth of post-war television, to British film noir, to the epitome of the tradition of touring theatre, and includes no fewer than seven stage and screen deaths. Clips from *The Painted Smile* and *Up the Junction* showed just some of that diversity, and prompted reminiscences of her role opposite Telly Savalas (then at the height of his fame in the

UK as TV cop Kojak) in the ITV production of *Man and Boy*, and as Doris, the barmaid, in the Churchill Theatre Bromley production of *Flare Path* from which she treated us to a reading of her key final scene. Of course, we could not let her work as a comedy actor go unmentioned, and excerpts of her work with Sid James and Tony Hancock accompanied her thoughts as both a favourite cast member and close friend of two of our greatest post-war film comedy actors.

A break for refreshments and a tour of just a fraction of the Cinema Museum's vast collection of artefacts recording the experience of cinema-going in Britain preceded our featured film for the day, *The Sound Barrier* from 1952, directed by David Lean and featuring TR's Academy Award-nominated screenplay. Our choice was prompted by Simon Heffer's fascinating address at this year's birthday dinner, in which he highlighted the film, which won three BAFTAs in 1953, as a masterful depiction of British society in the immediate post-war years. Capturing the often hazardous exploration of the potential of jet aircraft, and centring on a fictional account of attempts to reach the speed of sound, the film features a superb performance by Ralph Richardson in the role of aircraft company boss Sir John Ridgefield, ably supported by Denholm Elliott, Ann Todd and Nigel Patrick as the family members drawn into his quest to master the new technology. As Simon Heffer described in his *Telegraph* article on Rattigan, "His characters are the masters of the clipped accent, the raised eyebrow, but also harbour the volcanic passions that lie beneath the sang-froid of the English personality. Writing at his peak in the immediate post-war period, Rattigan captured an aspect of the times perfectly, and held up the mirror to a distinct section of society".

Once again, we are grateful to Society member Martin Humphries, a director of the Cinema Museum, for his hospitality in arranging our visit and, of course, to Liz Fraser for allowing us to share in memories of her career. What nicer way to spend a cold December afternoon! ✨



# 191 writers in search of the TRS new play award

*Barbara Longford reports on the progress since the launch in January*

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David Suchet and Julian Fellowes helped us to launch the award in January at the Jermyn Street Theatre and scripts were invited until 31<sup>st</sup> August. The rules of the competition were published in the April edition of this magazine, but essentially we are looking for a play which Terence Rattigan himself (and a broad range of current theatregoers) might enjoy seeing in a West End theatre. We are not looking for copies or pastiches of the Rattigan style, rather for care and skill of dramatic construction and the originality of the playwright's voice.

The response has been magnificent and far beyond our expectations. One hundred and ninety-seven scripts were received, only six of which were not eligible, leaving us with 191 new theatre plays which all fulfil the judging criteria. Amongst the submissions are many plays of extremely high quality. Clearly there is a vast amount of writing talent in this country.

There was a great deluge of scripts towards the close of the competition. In fact the postmen at the PO Box volunteered to deliver three large sacks of scripts to my home in the final two weeks. We required hard copies as most of our volunteer readers preferred, understandably, to read from paper.

This presented a huge organisational challenge because our aim was to have each script read by two readers in the first instance. Fortunately 34 members of the Society, with a special interest or experience in script reading and/or theatre accepted my call for help. Their reports have been insightful, thorough and frequently witty and engaging. Giles Cole had prepared some Guidance Notes for readers, which aided consistency. Each play was scored on a scale of 1 to 10, to achieve a mark out of 20 from two readers. All plays were read anonymously.

As you would imagine, these one hundred and ninety-one plays contain a large range of subjects. There are historical plays, thrillers, comedies and black comedies, political plays, plays about identity searching, female power, relationships and ethics. There are also plays about real characters, such as Lenin, Christopher Robin (i.e. son of A. A. Milne), Che Guevara, Sir Malcolm Campbell, Rudolf Hess, Egon Schiele and Hitler. There is even a play with Terence Rattigan himself as the central character.

As I write, we are awaiting reports to come back from several readers, so some marks out of 20 are awaited. However, already we have identified 40 scripts which have great potential and which will go on to the third reader stage.

The third readers are TR's biographers Michael Darlow

and Geoffrey Wansell; our US Representative and Rattigan expert, Dr. Holly Hill; TR's former agent and friend, Michael Imison; TR's friend, the producer and director Adrian Brown; playwright and TRS Editor Giles Cole; former Head of the BBC Television Script Unit, John Scotney, and myself, a former script reader in BBC Radio Drama. We shall each receive five of the selected scripts to consider and we hope to achieve a shortlist of three plays to send to the final judges – Thea Sharrock, Julian Fellowes, David Suchet and Dan Rebellato – sometime early in 2017.

If all goes to plan, the Awards Ceremony will take place in the Spring/Summer of 2017 when the winner and runner-up will be announced. All members of the Society will be invited to the ceremony and also the 40 writers whose plays have appeared on the shortlist. We aim to inform the 40 shortlisted writers as soon as possible and after the announcement of the final results all writers who request it will be given feedback on their work.

Michael Wheatley-Ward has scheduled the professional production of the winning play at the Sarah Thorne Theatre in Broadstairs for the following dates in 2018:

Wednesday 14th February – Preview/Dress

Thursday 15th February

Friday 16th February


Saturday 17th February + matinee that day

Sunday 18th February

- a total of six performances, one of which will be a special Gala occasion for the members of the Society.

Our founder member, Roger Mills, has led on the organisation of the award in addition to reading a large number of scripts. Roger has been our special adviser from the outset, preparing both the media packs and the application forms. Clive Montellier has also been our organisational guide as well as having reported on many of the scripts.

Thanks are also due to Diana Scotney, who came up from Devon for a weekend to help me sort out the mailbags and register the entries. Diana has adapted scripts for BBC Radio Drama in the past, and she too has reported on many of the scripts.

We are greatly indebted to the 34 Society members who have been readers for the award and the Committee has decided to throw a special thank-you party for them at Sir Terence's birthplace in Cornwall Gardens, courtesy of the owner, our founder member, Junko Tarrant. 



# A A Milne foreshadows Coward, Priestley and Sartre?

**Martin Amherst Lock reports on a Society  
outing to a revival of a 1922 comedy**

It seems to be the lot of some composers and writers – Arthur Sullivan, Arthur Conan Doyle and JM Barrie spring to mind – to be celebrated for the lighter works in their output when the compositions they really cared about have been almost entirely forgotten. Such a one, of course, is AA Milne, and it is very much to Close Quarter Productions' credit that, in their recent revival of *The Dover Road* at the Jermyn Street Theatre, they have given us the opportunity to discover that far from being merely the creator of stories and verses 'for the child in all of us', Milne was also a playwright of considerable originality and stature.

*The Dover Road*, Milne's play of 1921, with its Jeeves-type butler and quartet of bright young things, is certainly very much of its period but in its unsentimental analysis of what makes any relationship work and its 'ending unhappily like a modern novel' it is as about as far removed from the whimsical world of overweight bears and gloomy donkeys as one can get.

The plot of the play is simple: the well-to-do owner of a substantial house on the Dover Road inveigles eloping couples into staying with him and by various underhand means forces them to remain under his roof for a week. Seven days of close proximity – a sort of period of probation – 'show us to each other as we really are'; the ardour of impulsive passion is swiftly cooled when you are compelled to admit just how grim your lover's behaviour can be at the breakfast table. Marriage, Milne insists, is an art, a profession and your having made a hash of one relationship is absolutely no guarantee that you're likely to make a success of a second. There's lots of laughter on the way and the predictable coincidence of the eloping husband bumping into his eloping wife, but the play firmly resists settling comfortably into the genre of a '20s comedy of manners: unlike a fairy book, the couples do not 'live happy ever after'; indeed, with startling modernity, it is the two men who finally escape together to a resort in the South of France, leaving the women high and dry back in England. Quite apart from its unsettling, unre-



Tom Durant-Pritchard and Georgia Maguire  
in *The Dover Road*. Photo: Matthew Kaltenborn

solved denouement, what is so striking about the play is its anticipating the themes and plots of so many later and much better known works: the escaping couples who realise their re-marriages are a big mistake in *Private Lives*; the enforced confinement in *Hay Fever* which reveals just how ghastly the one you thought you loved really is; and the eerie presence of someone who knows much more about you than you would like him to in *An Inspector Calls*. Perhaps most remarkably of all there are real shades of Sartre's *Huis Clos* in a play where 'one learns a lot down here'. Milne may be all but forgotten as a playwright but his ideas certainly live on in the drama of those who wrote after him.

Astonishingly, as far as we know, *The Dover Road* has not been performed professionally since it was first put on in the West End in 1922. It could hardly have been given a more polished and exuberant revival than the one produced by Giles Cole and Alexander Marshall and directed by Nichola McAuliffe at the Jermyn Street Theatre. The set oozed elegance and yet, with its shakily drawn, chalk-on-blackboard decorations, suggested that if we were in 'an hotel' it was one not wholly of this world. Stefan Bednarczyk's butler Dominic was the embodiment of understated superiority, all four of the impounded young people caught the cut-glass tones and bristling indignation of their class when thwarted extremely well, and the tensions between them were presided over and stage-managed with unshakeable and maddening good humour by Patrick Ryecart as the mysterious Mr Latimer.

Our warmest thanks are due to Barbara Longford for organising the outing, for Denis Moriarty for hosting the excellent dinner at the Oxford and Cambridge Club afterwards, and to Giles and Sandy for introducing us to a gem of a play which cast and audience alike evidently found hugely enjoyable. 🍷

*Cont. from p1...* Indeed her singing voice was as beautiful as her face and there's a recording she made in 1960 for Hal Prince of Gershwin and Porter songs which led to TR asking her to audition for the part of Diana in *Joie de Vivre*, the musical version of *French Without Tears*. Jean got the part, but decided she couldn't sustain six performances a week, and as it closed after only four performances, perhaps a wise decision. We gave Jean a 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party last year at TR's birthplace (courtesy of Junko Tarrant) and she gave us a pitch-perfect rendition of Cole Porter's *So in Love*, accompanied by Sam Joseph at the piano. I don't think anyone present on that day in 2015 will ever forget it.

Aged 16, in 1941, when studying at the Central School of Arts & Crafts, Jean applied to join the WAAFs eventually becoming Assistant to the Chief of the Control Commission in Germany. But here again there were early setbacks, which she overcame. I once mentioned that I was a volunteer with SSAFA (Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen Families Association). "Oh," she said, "they saved my life. They were so good to me during the war." When Jean was based in Yorkshire, she had a nervous breakdown, but through SSAFA she was sent to live with a wonderful Yorkshire family who restored her to full health and spirits.

After a brief spell as an air hostess, she launched herself into modelling, learning everything on the hoof, and became one of the most successful models of her day. Her book, *Model Girl*, published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson in 1956, is an unromantic and honest portrait of the toughness of that world. Success led to taking an apartment in Eaton Square where she met her neighbour, Terence Rattigan, and where she lived for the rest of her life.

Michael Darlow has said: *She was such a lovely person, always so elegant, fearless, kind and determined and a huge help to me over so many years. Terry hugely admired her and, in so far as he ever loved any woman, apart from his mother, he truly loved Jean and always talked about her with such warmth.*"

Publicity for *Model Girl* led to Jean's appearing on *What's My Line?* - an early BBC panel game. She was spotted by Anna Neagle and Herbert Wilcox and invited for a film test. She had no acting training, but was asked to dance a tango with Frankie Vaughan. All her life she adored dancing and she got the part of Wilfred Hyde White's rich society daughter in the 1958 film *Wonderful Things*. Jean's performance is a revelation. To me, she seems more stylish, relaxed and credible than Grace Kelly, whom she resembled. She was offered a seven-year contract, which TR advised her not to accept. She fell in love soon afterwards and, like Grace, she married her Prince.

Meeting Frankie Vaughan proved to be influential for

## Date for your diary

**Saturday 25 March**

A visit is being planned to **Terence Rattigan's former house** in Brighton, courtesy of its current owner, Society member Luke Jeffers. This will be followed by a special matinee of ***The Deep Blue Sea*** at Brighton's New Venture Theatre and the option of an early supper after the performance. Please see the enclosed flyer for more details.

## Honour for our Secretary

Clive Montellier has been awarded an OBE in the New Year Honours List for his services in the RAF.

Jean's future. When they were filming in Gibraltar she asked Frankie where he disappeared to each evening. Did he have a "lovely lass" on the island? Instead, he was going to a poor area to work in the Boys' Clubs and invited Jean along. They played darts and table tennis and Jean told the boys stories about her modelling life. Afterwards she told Frankie that it was the "best evening I've had in years". It was preferable to the Mirabelle, the 400 Club, the Savoy, Claridges, the Ritz, because it was "real life". Returning to England she was recruited to work with the National Association of Youth Clubs, visiting girls' clubs all over the country. It's now called UK Youth and Jean remained Vice-President until her death. For this and for other charitable work she was awarded an MBE in the Diamond Jubilee Honours List.

When thinking about Jean one easily forgets her blindness. Indeed she was registered blind in her later years but she coped with this affliction with such courage and spirit that it simply took one's breath away. She loathed gossip and I never heard her say an unkind word about anyone. Always she looked for a good aspect in people and her praise was direct and sincere. Jean picked out the best in all of us.

We are so grateful for the contribution Jean made to our young Society. "Use me as much as you can," she said. "I may not be around that much longer." Indeed she took on the role of President at the tender age of 86 and as well as speaking and attending many of our events, Jean was the star of two of them. She remained a star all her life.

Clive Montellier, TRS Secretary, sums up our feelings about a great lady: *"What a privilege it was to have been part of her long and full life, and how heartening to think that the Society allowed her to sparkle like the jewel she was until so near to the close of her story. The sense of fun, of forging her own way, and willingness never to take herself too seriously set her apart as someone very special in comparison with those whose lustre is much thinner. Sleep well, a much-loved lady."* ✨