

## LINES FROM LANCS: By James Hartley

## TRAVEL TROUBLE

If you want to get ahead, get a car—but buy a vehicle on which you can rely—not a load of trouble. A temperamental motor-car can play havoc with a professional career as recent sufferers Mike Arnold and Aubrey Phillips are able to testify.

Dependable transport is absolutely essential for theatrical tourists and a succession of inconvenient breakdowns since last Christmas has emboldened the partners to invest in a new car each. Additionally they have acquired a seven-tonner panthecon for transporting entire productions, and their own caravan to dispense with for ever the oft recurring problem of finding suitable digs.

"Costly," admits Mike, "but peace of mind is a bigger asset than money in the bank."

**RONNIE PARNELL** and **Marie Ashton**, the popular Anglo-Scottish song and dance duo, have no reason to blame the car in which they were travelling to Glasgow to open in a season show at the Pavilion. For the crash in which Ronnie broke a shoulder and Marie suffered severe cuts and bruises. As a result their car is what we commonly call a write-off and, due to hospital treatment, the pair had to cancel the first half of their Pavilion engagement.

But the bookers, Galls of Glasgow, are most considerate, and we were allowed to join the show for the last few weeks," tells young Parnell.

For six past summers this talented man-and-wife team have worked Blackpool, but, for a change, this year they're engaged in "Dazzle" at Scarborough Spa and finding the change much to their liking.

**TONY DEXTER**, the puppeteer, is next on my list of road accident victims. He was heading north, from Wales for a double booking, Manchester way, when cornering on a rain-swept road, his van developed a wobble and in efforts to regain control he turned it over.

"I'll fetch a fair price for scrap," consoled the garage man. But in defiance of expert opinion Tony borrowed a sledge-hammer, bashed out the worst bulbs, replaced mirrors and hinges, and so on, and finally made it "tick" again.

It is safe to assume he is considering buying a replacement—but that is not now a matter for immediate urgency as Tony is currently engaged in a resident season at Rhos-on-Sea, presenting the Bramall-Somerby puppet show.

Yet a different sort of travel trouble has been inconveniencing Ronnie Codman—another puppeteer. Just before he moved into Butlin's, Pwllheli, for the season his van containing important props was

stolen and though the vehicle was subsequently found, some of its valuable contents—including irreplaceable antique Italian puppet heads which have been in his family for well-nigh a hundred years—were missing and still haven't been recovered.

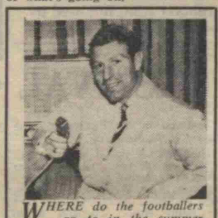
Most distressing, Ronnie's father, well over 60, is still working—as well as a man half his age—and the family's legendary Punch Puppet Theatre (now next door to Liverpool Law Courts) is still a unique Merseyside attraction.

By the way, Ronnie and his wife are expecting a blessed event next month. "If it's a boy there may be another generation to prolong the long line of Codman entertainers," hints the hopeful father-to-be.

It is said that true artists are always nervous just before they reach their entrance—and Colin Grainger, the singing soccer international (of Port Vale F.C.), is no exception.

To me, performing in a music hall or club is as nerve-teasing and exciting as any football match—but I try not to betray such weakness. Nerves on the football field reduce team collaboration and cost points; nerves on stage mar expression and alienate an audience," he analogized. He is a very pleasing vocalist, notable for a smooth style and ability to sustain long notes. Physical jerks and regular breathing exercises partially account for these pronounced qualities.

With northern audiences 26-year-old Colin seems to be as popular as an entertainer as he is in soccer circles and thanks to Slim Farrell in the N-East and Sonny Gross in the N-West, he gets a fair share of what's going on.



WHERE do the footballers go to in the summer time? Port Vale outside left Colin Grainger exercises his lungs in the Burnley area, in which he is highly rated as a ballplayer...

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## CLUB CORNER

THE work of Burnley's Brian Tattersall may be less spectacular than that of Liverpool's Brian Epstein, nevertheless in a different branch of entertainment wherein the latter is proving a so dynamic force, the former's popular influence is similarly felt and likewise significant.

In Showland, young Epstein at 29 has found fame for recognising talent in the raw and polishing it into star material. Tattersall, not a deal older than his namesake, is a leading architect in Chaland.

He explores the North-West, acquiring suitable properties and converting them into luxurious theatre clubs, the sort of well-run establishments in which the tops of the time are proud to appear.

There is no connection between the two Brian's, but they have much in common. Both are obviously shrewd businessmen, speculative and enterprising, and I gather, each might boast substantial successes in either directions widely separated from their current activities.

Mr. Tattersall's background embraces the founding of an extremely popular international pen-friends' club—the largest in the world—and he also controls cinema and bingo halls. He has two lush theatres in the Burnley area, one at Widnes, and others nearing completion at Prestwich and Blackburn. The latest addition to the Tattersall circuit, ranking with the best in the North, is the Regency at Widnes. At last it seems that a long-felt need of this theatreless Lancashire town is to be generously fulfilled, and Warrington, St. Helens, and Liverpool are conveniently near to share in the bounty.

Tommy Trinder was the magical name that packed the place on opening night—the applause fairly echoed with laughter and applause from the moment T.T. stepped into the limelight until he was reluctantly allowed to leave 40 minutes later.

Impressive, too, was the charming new balladist, Julie Davies, with a style distinctly her own and apt material.

Comptre-vocalist Paul Kendall was another polished contributor to the well balanced bill which owed much to the musically backing of the Gerry Osborne trio. Well-

experienced John Kirby (late Manchester's Whisky-a-go-go) is the manager and Michael Dymann (Manchester agent) controls the booking.

**CONTRARY** to reports now in circulation Tracey Lee, the Australian impersonator, has not yet worked in the North. He is an international artist whose first date in England was Ilford's Room at the Top last December, since which he has toured South Africa and appeared for a short season at Winston's in London. Tracey, who is reckoned tops in his line, is due for his first provincial date next Monday, June 15, when he opens for the week at the Mersey Hotel in Manchester.

**THE Beaver**—within a stone's throw of rural concerns, Mister Smith's and Denos—is the newest nitrate to open in Manchester city centre. This former cellar, with choice decor, artistic lighting, and elegant furnishings, is as attractive as they come. Already the owners, "Lefty" Kakou, former restaurateur, has installed a competent combo and is on the look-out for a resident singer and suitable attractions.

**THE North Wales Clubs** Command to be staged at the Casbar Club, Rhyl, on June 22, is part of a plan to expose fresh talent and evoke new opportunities for exchange for a public from this shop-window-show is not yet complete and I understand that recommendations are eligible for consideration up to Thursday next.

**NEWS** of College chief Leslie Lawrence's unexpected mid-night immersion—was, I was, duly relayed by the Rocking Vibe into the water-filled bath intended for Bubbles. Marie—has been Clubland's latest star of the week. And last Thursday Mr. Lawrence exacted revenge in full—he promised the Vicars a re-booking in exchange for a public (from the stage) apology. And a very profitable contract it proved—for both parties.

James Hartley

## TATE'S GALLERY

It's true what they say!

I suppose I pass the Canton Liberal Club about two dozen times a week. It lies between myself and the shops, myself and the buses. Most evenings, there is some kind of sound from within—usually the hiss of billiard balls, occasionally a thumping bass drum of a dance band, sometimes a throaty female singer or one of the thin tenors in Sevom Wales seems to be so rich.

One of the committee even lives next door to me. Fraternising could not ever be much simpler. And yet...

I took the trouble to find out who was entertaining. Turned out to be The Easybeats, whose usual stomping ground is the Stock Club at Pier Head, the last stop before Wales steps dustily into the Bristol Channel.

Not the most original of "beat" groups, but enthusiastic.

Now, the committee have promised to keep me informed—by taping on the wall, or something...

Last week-end was strenuous. The sort of week-end when one thinks of appealing to a Higher Authority to provide one or more additional days.

Friday night—Ocean Club, Cardiff. Short pop for laughs at Jimmy Marshall. Back on the road. The Marina Club, Penarth. Allen Labelle and Glyn Thomas. And Miss Marina, 1964.

Saturday night—what happened Saturday night? Viewing the success

## Hot From Scotland: Gordon Irving Reporting CYRIL N EDINBURGH

DO English comedians "die" in Scotland? I don't subscribe to that theory, and they've a particularly good chance when they play East coast cities like Edinburgh or Aberdeen, which are both very much pro-England and not so downright Scottish as Glasgow.

So the chances of success for Cyril Fletcher and his talented company are bright when they open at the Edinburgh Lyceum for seven weeks' season from June 30.

Cyril is bringing his wife, Betty Astell, to Edinburgh, along with comedienne Betty Jewel. The latter was in Edinburgh some years back in a "Half-Past Eight" with the late Harry Gordon and, more recently, in an Alce Finlay pantio at Glasgow Pavilion.

I'm glad to see that the Edinburgh season (the Lyceum, as you know, is the Capital's new civic theatre) will have 8.15 p.m. openings. Late-opening is a more civilised procedure these modern days, when nearly every person has a motor-car. I'm certain the old-fashioned days of 6.30 p.m. opening can't stay much longer with us.

Also heading north, for Cyril Fletcher's "Summer Masquerade," is musical comedy man Billy Tasker, Fletcher, Peter Hudson, Glyn Hale, George Kellditch, Keith Lee, and the Irving Davies Dancers.

"Summer Masquerade" is already famed at English seaside resorts like Hastings, Bournemouth and Tor-

quay. Now his fame may well spread to summer-time Edinburgh.

**PLANNING** a visit to Scotland, next month, is variety-lover André Duncan. Billy Tasker, who has always taken a great interest in the Scottish variety stage—mainly, he says, through following this

clubland scene. André and his tall blonde wife Léona tell me: "One theatre we would really enjoy visiting would be Ayr's Gaity, and we'd be flattered if we could meet the Poppewells, who are often mentioned here by visiting British turns. We'd also like to go to Blackpool."

My Belgian friends recall a previous visit to Scotland, an evening of "excellent variety," three nights, the kindness of the people, and calls on Nat Jackley at the old Newcastle Empire and on Gaston Palmer at Glasgow Empire.

Says André: "In Brussels, we still have 13 theatres open in the winter (six in the summer). One, the Gaity, is run on a permanent policy, three shows daily. The only variety house left is the Ancienne Belgique, 1800 seats, which is open eight months in the year."

**THE** Fife report of last even, so popular with holidaymakers, has a summer show promoted by Bill Harding's Top Flight Agency, with Glasgow comedian Frank Harvey featured. Bill calls it "Summer '64", and it has a gala opening on Friday, June 19, the night that Loris, Rothsay, Girvan and other seaside shows tie off.

In the company, I note, is Bob Leslie, singing and 'feeding' in comedy. This is really Leslie Robertson, of Inverness, once a "Babe" in the Wood at Glasgow Alhambra, Aberdeen singer Irene Adair is also in the show, along with dulcimer-player Jimmy Scott, a promising Italian singer named Adio Moretti, accordionist Billy Little, Gina and Roy, Ian and the Echoes ("Leven" and "Swallow group"), and the Three Shades, from Dublin.

## POSH PARS

by Ken Reed

**WHO** should walk into the Kit Kat, Hunstanton last week for a chat but my dear old pal Professor George Dear, still going strong at 78 years of age.

George, who still bills himself as comedian, magician and entertainer, claims to be in his prime, and I don't doubt it for one minute. It was a few months ago that I worked with him in his home town of March, near Peterborough, and had the pleasure of sitting through one of the most amusing and entertaining programmes of combined comedy and magic it has been my good fortune to see.

To hear George, who claims to be one of the 'Stage's' oldest readers reminiscence, is like listening to a history of show-business.

And he's still doing a bit, he says. **JOHNNY DUNCAN** and Pete Sayers were last night's guest artists at Peterborough Folk Club, together with four Irish lads from Hampstead who call themselves The Tinklers.

Local folk singer Alec Attenson, who is the club organiser, tells me that he and partner Alan Twelvetree are at present waiting news of a TV appearance. They have both worked extremely hard to put folk music on its feet in Peterborough.

**APPEARING** in Peterborough last week, for the very first time, was that casual and pleasing vocalist from Rotherham, Jeff Carver.

Jeff made a big hit with his audience and is certain to make many return visits to the city. On the same bill was Julie Michaels from Skegness, who is shortly to appear in Old Tyne there.

**EVERY** year, about 30,000 people attend the Sports and Family Day, staged by F. Perkins Ltd., at the Peterborough district company. This year, the organisers are staging both variety and Rock shows for an estimated record attendance.

The variety show, two houses during the afternoon will include the very popular Ricky Parks from Doncaster, local magician Bernard Carr, and Peterborough tenor "Big Jim Whyte".

Pianist Reg Walden will fill the seat at the piano and young truly takes on the compe and comedy spots.

The Rock bill should be a big draw, and will include the very sexy groups—The Cruisers, The Four Tunes and The Croupiers.

Just to make sure that the Rockers get full value for their money the organisers have engaged Kenny Lynch and The Laurie Jay Combo, together with that very popular local group, the Dynatones.

In complete contrast, the Dagenham Girl Pipers will be making a return visit to the show.

**GRIMSBY** clubs are at present enjoying one of the biggest laughter-raising acts ever to visit them. The Three Hopes from Hull, Agent Don Carroll tells me that it is the funniest act he has seen for years.

**GRIMSBY'S** Lumpers Club has made a change in resident organisers. Now filling the chair is that grand little ivory tickler Howard May. Howard did a stint on piano on the "Queen Elizabeth" before taking shore-based work in Lines.

He certainly gets around. The first time I met him was at the Anchorage Inn, Brighton, and again at the Eskimo Club, Grimsby, where he was appearing with his trio.

**PIANIST** Johnny Francis has moved from the Mecca to fill the piano spot at Humberstone's Beachcomber Club.

**GRIMSBY** has a treat in store. Ann Ryder, ex-Blue Bell girl from Manchester opens in cabaret there this week.



Ken Swan with his well-known dummy McGhee, vent act in the Calum Kennedy Show at Glasgow Metropole. Ken is spending the summer at home after many tours of the Middle and Far East.

**THISN'T THAT:** The Joystings, the Salvation Army 'pop' group, will appear in Glasgow on September 5, 6 and 7, appearing at the Concert Hall and in Green's Playhouse... Scots singer Allan Bruce is moving to the Glasgow market from Montreal, Canada, and now has Ashley-Steiner Famous Artists Inc. as his agents.

**LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT**  
continued on P. 19, 20, 21

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