

# SINGIN' N THE RAIN

TWO DAYS ago I spotted a potterilla outside the Ulster Bank in University Road, Belfast. A few months ago I could not have distinguished between a potterilla and the Right Honourable John Taylor, or even Mr. Gerry Fitz, referred to recently in a newspaper as 'the little green man'.



**ALF MCCREARY**

A potterilla is not, as some of you might imagine, a special kind of tortoise, or a new type of pedestrian crossing, or even a peculiar kind of armoured tank of the type used in lightning coups on tribal societies even less than ours.

and broken stems, offers the same kind of thrill as a long, straight drive in golf, the sight of a new continent from a jet plane, or the craftsmanship in a line of poetry or an inspired paragraph of prose.

The feeling is not quite explicable, but you recognise it immediately. And gardening, unlike golf or other forms of torture known as sport, is more controllable, rather more permanent, and much more rewarding.

In the past I thought that gardening was the preserve of the geriatric, the last creative gesture of those who close to the soil that they had one foot already in the grave. Gardening at worst seemed a chore, like paying bills or listening to a bore at a party. At best it seemed to offer only a temporary vision of roses in bloom and trim lawns, until Nature took its toll and the rose petals flopped onto the long grass peeping between the weeds.

Take, for example, the humble entirrhium. They cost a few pence as bedding plants, but with care, sunshine and rain they can be a priceless asset to any garden. Rows too, are worth every minute of attention and when the first blooms bud into the world, as they are doing now, all that messex with manure and all the stinky padding at dusk with insect-killer at the ready, seem infinitely worthwhile.

There are limits, however. Dried blood is recommended for roses, but have refrained from applying such treatment due to my fear of attracting a stray dog or a stray Gracula to crawl among my pines.

Advice to gardeners is as plentiful as blackly on a summer's evening. I retain my awe of Messrs. Loads, Flowerbuds and all the other experts with good charity and signing, with all its chores and glads, composit

compost and a suggestion of wheel-barrows. A gardening book of this sort, one might prefer the money nowadays, thank you! and I acquired a few more actually might prefer the money nowadays, thank you! and I acquired a few more actually might prefer the money nowadays, thank you!

The weather of course is vital and this is the first year in my life when I can remember a June downpour where I have been actually singin' in the rain.

Perhaps the summery gain setting had something to do with it while outside the theatre it was like dining out. Or perhaps more probably, the success of the final comedy was the fact that Roy Hayter (Norman) being loosened from his ties as director felt free to bind a stronger link with the other 'Round and Round the Garden'.

Next year... who knows. Thoughts of the autumn plantings are already filtering across the mind. But whatever happens it is rewarding already to be able to talk about potterilla, or mesembryanthemum, and still look another gardener straight in the eye. Let me put it another way. When you read this I shall be, with luck, in the north regions of Holland and perhaps even in Amsterdam itself. But part of my consciousness will also be concerned with a small patch of land in North Belfast. Maybe it's only when your own back garden seems as important as the tree-lined canals of old Amsterdam that you know where your heart really belongs....



## Norman finally conquers

IN Round and Round the Garden, the last of the Alge Aylchairs (Norman) the Norman Conquers, which opened at the Arts Theatre last night, Norman finally conquered the audience and sent them home happy after having taken them through 'Table Manners' and 'Living Together' since the end of May.

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'Round and Round the Garden' is directed by Robert Cooper who directs plays for Radio 3 and 4 and was previously network radio drama producer in Manchester. While Hayter is an excellent director and actor, I think Cooper added that touch of much-needed freshness to the 'Garden'.

★

Here we have the continuing story of Norman, Tom the Vet, Sarah Ann, Reg and Ruth. Reg played in fine fettle in the same order by Hayter, Mark Mulholland, Maureen Thomson, Sheila Byrne, John Fahy and Shireen Shah. And once they all got into the sunny garden of the Victorian tearaway-type house, their vicarage must be acclaimed.

Norman fails to skip off for a weekend to East Grinstead with Annie, takes a sudden shine for Sarah and Tom even manages to give Ruth a tumble on the garden grass. Again Mark Mulholland is a tip-top Tom.

# The picture that Joe painted was a real riot...

JOE O'KANE from the Market House in Belfast is down on his luck these days. Like thousands of others he is on the dole, but he is a talented chap and with a little help from a friend, he may soon get the break he is looking for.

Joe used to work in the bakery in Elm Street but lost his job just before last Christmas. He had always had a burning ambition to be a painter and had sold several pictures of life on the streets of Belfast but never got the breakthrough he was really after.

It took redundancy to whet his palette and seriously attempt to market his work. A friend who owns a picture gallery in Belfast, Mr. Henry Kane took him in charge and has recently been exhibiting Joe's pictures.

Joe has sketched and painted as a hobby all his life. But the inspiration to capture life on the streets came when his son and daughter Stephen and Theresa were born.

It was Interment Day, 1971. Joe's personal record of the troubles is worth seeing. The picture he holds in his hands looking a little bewildered as a soldier crouches behind.

The scene was a riot in the Market, Joe's patch, and one which he has faithfully recorded in his black and white and whitewash water colours. Cromac Street before it was demolished, the famous pubs and shops in the area, the charming Georgian houses in Joy Street and Hamilton Street, St. Malachy's church, etc.

The exhibition hasn't been running long says Henry Kane, owner of the Picture Gallery in Queen Street but there has been considerable interest shown in Joe's work. He really made a name for himself when Elvis Presley died and a portrait he did sold like hot cakes. The dole queue got Joe down for a while, but he is now back in the streets with his sketch pad, hoping for the break that will make him a full-time professional artist.



Joe O'Kane (left) and Henry Kane of the Picture Gallery, Queen Street, Belfast.

to look at the 'highlands' of their 'fair county' — the celebrated Crough and Slieve Gullion mountains. And as a special attraction it was mentioned that members might be able to view Slieve Gullion's colony of wild goats.

These wild goats gave the forestry section of the Department of Agriculture some bother in days gone past, because of their attacks on the bark of trees.

There was also disappointment for the Armaghians and their friends. They roamed the foothills around Slieve Gullion but not a goat was seen. The new Forest Park and scenic drive looked delightful — but "Whang up the goats!" the visitors asked.

An inquiry to the official

of the Forestry Service the following day brought the truth about the wild goats. "Some months ago a che came in the night with a vehicle, we think, and stole our entire herd of wild goats."

There is a rumour floating around Clamough, Forkhill and Crossmaglen, that the wild goat raid had some

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## AN ULSTER LOG

By Alan Whittsett

objective — one being that the goatskins were required for curing and stretching for the making of Lambeg drums!

But for those who want to see wild goats take a trip to Loch Naver, the forestry area near Derrygonnelly in Co. Fermanagh, and cast an eye down at a couple of the little Loos Erne islands.

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Manager, Patricia M. Mulvey, Technician Dr. J. C. Washburn, arrived May 12, 1978, at 8.47 am, 9hrs. Some 22 inches.

Two lung power, free squalling, screen lined, water cooled exhaust, changeable seat covers. The management announces to the public there will be no more new models this year.

## Fiddling book

ARMAGH Pipers Club have launched yet another new book on traditional Irish music — "Learn to Play the Fiddle". It follows the success of their previous books on the tin whistle and Uilleann pipes, says co-author Brian Valley who wrote the book with his wife Eithne, who is quite an expert on the instrument.

We start with a general progression from easy tunes using only a few notes on two strings until towards the end there are 10 or so direct transcriptions of some of the fiddle classics." Brian explained. Altogether there are 55 tunes including every rhythm in Irish music.

The book, which the Arts Council helped get published by Regency Press, Belfast, eases out the problems which beginners will encounter, I am assured. And as well there is an introduction and theoretical section where such problems as traditional style and classical are discussed.

## Latest model

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## Is this the oldest BB card left?

THE ULSTER Log's offer to reproduce a BB membership card older than a 1961 card sent in by a reader in Cloughie has been taken up. Here it is and it's dated 1899.

The card belongs to Edwin Orr, of Donaldson and was presented to his grandfather, David Macanally, of London Street, Ravenhill Road, South Belfast, on joining the BB in October 1899 at the age of 15. The 15-year-old private was a member of the 19th Belfast company connected with McQuinn Memorial Presbyterian Church.

His membership card is in mint condition being lovingly cared for the past 79 years. Can you beat that?

THE Medici Hawks by Martin Woodhouse and Robert Ross (Hoggar and Stoughton, £4.50) is a fairly pure historical adventure — the third in the series, parodying Leonardo da Vinci as a kind of "James Bond of the Renaissance".

(According to the blurb), Lorenzo de Medici is a kind of Renaissance "M" who sends anti-engineers to duel against Du Vinci, on

missions of incredible danger involving sexy Florentine ladies and treacherous Romans. It may be sound enough to make the Moon Lisa burst out laughing, but in fact it reads a lot better that it sounds.

What's on tomorrow is on P-14

Wild goat chase... BY WAY of a change in the County Armagh programme, the County Armagh Society took themselves off recently on a trip to South Armagh.

Correction THE GREMLINS have been at it again. A Log story of the "One for the Record", about the new RUC ladies' choir, said the choir has obtained the services of Kay Simpson. This should have read Irene Brown.

# Bank Buildings

## 25th Anniversary

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Acrylic Wool. Wide width. Checks, Plaids and Tweeds. All washable. metre £1.40

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