

FORGET-ME-NOT-  
LANE  
1978

# Look back in good humour

APART from being one of the funniest plays of the last decade, **Forget-Me-Not Lane** is paradoxically one of the saddest too.

Some playwrights might have been content simply to amuse the audience with reminiscences of a wartime childhood, sexual awakening and parental eccentricities.

But Peter Nichols sought a more truthful reflection of life at home and you feel the end product is uncompromisingly honest.

The play is on at Hampton Court Theatre this week and Gerry Jones' sensitive production is one of the best I have seen, coping admirably with the many changes of mood and pace.

He is fortunate in having two of Teddington Theatre Club's finest actors in the play's key roles. John Roth holds it all together with enormous dexterity as Frank, a mixed-up sociology lecturer looking back on his life from the disillusionment of middle age. He is on stage almost the whole time and yet one never tires of his voice or his presence.

Michael Godley, as Frank's overbearing and pedantic father, somehow manages to be irritating, amusing and even likeable at the same time, which is exactly what the part requires. Tribute is paid in the programme to the late Michael Bates, who created the role in the West End and whose performance could only be described as definitive.

Playing Frank as a boy is Richard Reddrop, giving a nicely observed study of long-suffering insouciance,

and Sarat Broughton has some good moments as Young Urse, the girl Frank grows up to marry (even if she did look as if she'd escaped from St. Trinian's).

Jean Brown plays Old Urse (Ursula in the programme) and Bernice Warren is Amy, Frank's self-righteous mother, who seems to have miraculously escaped the ravages of time in this production.



**SALLY BOTTOMLEY**  
—last-minute takeover

Two members of the cast were last-minute replacements — Doug Andrews took over from Ivor Davis as Mr. Magic, and Sally Bottomley, aged 16, found herself playing Miss 1940 for the first time at the dress rehearsal!

Sally's mother, Patti, had planned to wear roller skates for the part of Frank's fantasy floozy, but she came a cropper last week and Sally agreed to take over, wisely substituting tap-dancing shoes for the roller skates. — NS