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SF PERUSALS

Kenneth Grahame's

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS

Adapted for the stage by

Alan Bennett

Additional lyrics and music by

Jeremy Sams

SAMUEL FRENCH

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Based on the original novel by Kenneth Grahame
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Lyrics to "Camp-Fire Song", "Christmas Song", "Washerwoman's Song"
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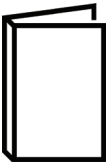
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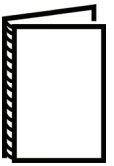
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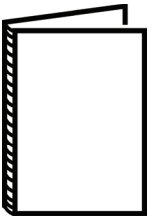
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alan Bennett was born in Leeds in 1934. After studying at Oxford University he collaborated as a writer and performer with Dudley Moore, Jonathan Miller and Peter Cook in *Beyond the Fringe* in 1960 at the Edinburgh Festival.

He then turned to writing full-time and produced his first stage play, *Forty Years On*, in 1968. His other plays include *Getting On*, *Habeas Corpus*, *The Old Country*, *The Lady in the Van*, *A Question of Attribution*, *The Madness of George III* (together with the Oscar-nominated screenplay *The Madness of King George*), an adaptation of Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* and *The History Boys*, as well as many television plays, such as, *A Day Out*, *Sunset Across the Bay*, *A Woman of No Importance* and the series of monologues *Talking Heads* and *Talking Heads II*.

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS

First performed in the Olivier Theatre at the Royal National Theatre, London, on 12th December 1990, with the following cast:

The River Bank

MOLE	David Bamber
RAT	Richard Briers
TOAD	Griff Rhys Jones
BADGER	Michael Bryant
OTTER	John Matshikiza
ALBERT, *a horse*	Terence Rigby
PORTLY, *an otter*	Tom Smith/Lewis Slayden/Sam Pay
TOMMY, *a hedgehog*	Jessica Honeyball/Louise Mantle/ Michael Walker
BILLY, a hedgehog	Sophie Grimble/Helen Edwards/ Theo Goldsmith

RABBITS: Chris Larner, Charlotte Medcalf, David Joyce, Tricia Morrish, Nicholas Monu, Derek Smee
HEDGEHOGS: Nick Holder, Mike Murray, Judith Coke, Mona Hammond
SQUIRRELS: Sue Devaney, Raymond Platt, Guy Moore
FIELDMICE, SMALL RABBITS, SMALL SQUIRRELS: Finchley Children's Music Group

The Wild Wood

CHIEF WEASEL	Tim McMullan
NORMAN, *a weasel*	Adrian Scarborough
Other **WEASELS**	The Company
STOATS	James Goode, Nick Holder
GERALD, *a ferret*	David Joyce
SERGEANT FRED FERRET	Chris Larner
FOX	Derek Smee
THE VOICE OF PAN	Duncan Bell

The Wide World

PARKINSON, *a car salesman*	Guy Moore
MOTORIST RUPERT	Raymond Platt
MOTORIST MONICA	Judith Coke
MAGISTRATE	John Nettleton
CLERK OF THE COURT	Mike Murray
POLICEMAN	Nicholas Monu
GAOLER'S DAUGHTER	Sue Devaney
WASHERWOMAN	Mona Hammond
GUARD	Adrian Scarborough
TRAIN DRIVER	Nick Holder
TICKET CLERK	Derek Smee
BARGEWOMAN	Carol Macready
GYPSY	James Goode

Musicians: Keith Thompson, Sarah Clarke, Anna Hemery, David Joyce, Chris Larner, Charlotte Medcalf, Tricia Morrish, Michael S. Murray, Jane Sebba

Directed by Nicholas Hytner
Designed by Mark Thompson
Lighting by Paul Pyant
Music and additional lyrics by Jeremy Sams
Music directed by Keith Thompson

SONGS

1	**Ducks' Ditty** – All	(Page 10)
2	**Camp-Fire Song** – All	(Page 14)
3	**Toad's Song** – Toad and Rabbits	(Page 27)
4	**Christmas Song** – Fieldmice	(Page 39)
5	**Washerwoman's Song** – Bargewoman	(Page 49)
6	**Where's Toad?** – Ensemble	(Page 53)
7	**Ducks' Ditty II** (Reprise) – All	(Page 68)

A song book containing these songs is available on sale from Samuel French Ltd. Additional incidental music and orchestrations by Jeremy Sams are also available on hire from Samuel French Ltd.

CHARACTERS

The River Bank

MOLE
RAT
TOAD
BADGER
OTTER
PORTLY, *a young otter*
ALBERT, *a horse*

HEDGEHOG BILLY, HEDGEHOG TOMMY, RABBIT ROBERT, RABBIT ROSE, RABBIT RONALD, HEDGEHOG HERBERT, HEDGEHOG HAROLD/HARRY, SQUIRREL SHIRLEY, SQUIRREL RAYMOND, SQUIRREL SAMUEL, MOUSE MARK, MOUSE MAUREEN, MOUSE MALCOLM, MOUSE MARTIN, MOUSE MARGARET, MOUSE MARTHA, MOUSE MARY. RABBITS, HEDGEHOGS, SQUIRRELS, FIELDMICE

The Wild Wood

CHIEF WEASEL
WEASEL NORMAN
GERALD FERRET
SERGEANT FRED FERRET
FOX
WEASEL WILFRED, STOAT CYRIL, STOAT IAN, STOAT STUART, STOAT GERALD. WEASELS, STOATS

The Wide World

PARKINSON, *a car salesman*
MOTORIST RUPERT
MOTORIST MONICA
MAGISTRATE
CLERK OF THE COURT
POLICEMAN
GAOLER'S DAUGHTER
WASHERWOMAN
GUARD
TRAIN DRIVER
TICKET CLERK
BARGEWOMAN
GYPSY

INTRODUCTION

Some time in 1987 Richard Eyre, newly appointed Director of the National Theatre, asked me if I'd think about writing a play that would combine *The Wind in the Willows* with some account of the life of its author, Kenneth Grahame. I had one or two similar approaches around that time, including a proposal for a film in which Bob Hoskins was to play Rat and Michael Caine, Toad. Kenneth Grahame died in 1932, so this flurry of interest could be put down to money and management waking up to the fact that, fifty years on, here was a bestseller that was now out of copyright.

Cut to December 1990, a week before the opening of the play I eventually wrote. Passing the British Museum, I ran into Bodley's Librarian, David Vaisey, who was taking a gloomy breather from some unending committee on the impending transfer to the new British Library. As I told him about rehearsing *The Wind in the Willows*, he became gloomier still. What I had not known was that Kenneth Grahame's long love affair with Oxford had led him to bequeath the copyright in the book to the university, and a good little earner it had proved to be. Now the National Theatre's gain was about to be the Bodleian Library's loss.

I don't recall reading *The Wind in the Willows* as a child, or indeed any of the classics of children's literature. This was partly the library's fault. In those days Armley Junior Library at the bottom of Wesley Road in Leeds bound all their volumes in heavy maroon or black, so that *The Adventures of Milly Molly Mandy* were every bit as forbidding as *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Doubtless *The Wind in the Willows* was there somewhere, along with *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *Alice* and all the other books every well-brought-up *Children's Hour*-listening child was supposed to read. Actually, I think I do remember looking at *Alice* and being put off by the Tenniel illustrations. "Too old-fashioned," I thought, "looks like a classic," and back it went on the shelf.

It was only in the sixties, when I was rather haphazardly reading round the Edwardians with some vague idea of writing a history play, (which eventually turned into *Forty Years On*), that

I read Kenneth Grahame's *The Golden Age* and *Dream Days*. I left *The Wind in the Willows* until last because I thought I had read it already – this being virtually the definition of a classic: a book everyone is assumed to have read and often thinks they have done so.

One consideration that had kept me away from the book for so long, gave it a protective coating every bit as off-putting as those black and maroon bindings of my childhood, was that it had fans. Fans are a feature of a certain kind of book. It's often a children's book – *Winnie-the-Pooh*, *Alice* and *The Hobbit* are examples – or it is a grown-up children's book such as those of Wodehouse, E. F. Benson and Conan Doyle. But Jane Austen and Anthony Trollope are nothing if not adult and they have fans too – and fan clubs – so children are not the essence of it.

What is common to all these authors, though, is the capacity to create self- contained worlds; their books constitute systems of literary self-sufficiency in ways that other novels, often more profound, do not. It is a kind of cosiness. Dickens is not cosy; he is always taking his reader back into the real world in a way that Trollope, who is cosy, does not. So it is Trollope who has the fans. In our own day the same distinction could be drawn between the novels of Evelyn Waugh and those of Anthony Powell – Powell with fans, Waugh not. And though exceptions occur to me even as I write – the Brontës? (Fans of the lives more than of the books.) Hardy? (Fans of the scenery) – I have always found fans a great deterrent: "It's just your kind of thing." "Really? And how would you know?"

Back in 1988, I set to work trying to interweave Grahame's real and fictional worlds, but I soon ran into difficulties. Grahame's life had not been a happy one. Born in 1859, he never had (as he put it) "a proper equipment of parents", and was effectively orphaned at the age of five when his mother died of scarlet fever and his drunkard father packed him off to Cookham in Berkshire to live with his grandparents; he never saw his father again. He was sent to St Edward's School in Oxford, where he did moderately well, and was looking forward to going up to university there when the family – or the "grown-ups", as he thought of them all his life – decided he should go into the City as a clerk ("a pale-faced quilldriver") in the Bank of England.

Disappointed though he was (and it was a disappointment that did not fade), Grahame did well at the Bank, and eventually

became Secretary at the early age of thirty-nine. Still, for all his conventional appearance (and despite the "Kitchener Needs You" moustache), he was hardly a conscientious clerk and, even in those relaxed days, soon acquired a reputation for sloping off early. When he was at his desk, he was often not doing the Bank's work but writing articles for the *National Observer* and *The Yellow Book*. Pretty conventional for the most part, his pieces deplored the creeping tide of suburbia and extolled the charms of the countryside, sentiments that have been familiar and fashionable ever since, although nowadays Grahame's style is somewhat hard to take.

Grahame himself comes over as a sympathetic character who, even when he begins to acquire a literary reputation, still has about him the air of a humble clerk, tied to his desk and longing to escape – like those little men on the loose that crop up in Wells or, later, in Priestley and Orwell. Of course, it is easier if you are an animal: his draper's shop has to burn down and his death be assumed before Mr Polly can escape; with Mole, it is just a matter of flinging aside his duster and brush, saying, "Hang spring cleaning!" and then up he comes into the sunlight and finds himself in "the warm grass of a great meadow"... and a new life.

A new life of a different sort began for Grahame in 1899, when he was forty. Hitherto very much the bachelor, he suddenly – and to the surprise and consternation of his friends – became engaged to Elspeth Thompson, whom in due course he rather resignedly married. A Scot like himself, she was fey as well as formidable – insisting, for instance, on wearing a daisy chain to their wedding – but though their courtship had been conducted largely in baby talk, there does not seem to have been much talk about babies afterwards. Sex did not come up to the expectations of either of them, but before it was discontinued, they had one quick child, Alastair, who was born premature and half blind.

He was a precocious boy, though – Elspeth, in particular, insisting on his charm and ability – with the result that he was much spoiled and given to tantrums, during which he would beat his head on the ground in fits of grief and rage. When his father started to write letters to him telling the stories that, in 1908, became *The Wind in the Willows*, Mr Toad's tantrums were intended to ring a bell.

The book was far from being an immediate success ("As a contribution to natural history," wrote *The Times* critic, "the book is negligible"), but at least this saved Alastair Grahame from the fate of A. A. Milne's son Christopher Robin, dogged always by his fictional counterpart. Still there was not much else that went right for Alastair. Since his father had longed to go to Oxford, Alastair was sent there, but as the child of eccentric parents and lacking any social skills, he was as unhappy as he had been at Eton, and in 1920, was found dead on the railway line that runs by Port Meadow in Oxford.

The ironies are dreadful: the river bank, setting of the father's idyll, scene of the son's death; the train, Mr Toad's deliverer, the instrument of the real-life Mr Toad's destruction. Though these tragic events were made the substance of an excellent radio play – *The Killing of Toad* by David Gooderson – I found it impossible to imagine them incorporated in *The Wind in the Willows* without casting a dark shadow over that earthly paradise, and so the project lapsed.

In March 1990, at the suggestion of Nicholas Hytner, the National revived the idea of an adaptation of Grahame's book, only this time in the form of a Christmas show that would be virtually all sunlight and would display to advantage the technical capabilities of the Olivier stage.

My theatrical imagination is pretty limited. It is all I can do to get characters on to the stage. Once they are there, I can never think of a compelling reason for them to leave – "I think I'll go now" being the nearest I get to dramatic urgency. So I was too set in my ways to be instantly liberated by the technological opportunities of the commission.

"But there's a caravan in it," I remember complaining, "what do we do about that?"

"I'm sure it's possible," comforted Nicholas Hytner, who is accustomed to launching 747s from the stage. "Just write it in."

"But it's drawn by a *horse*," I persisted. "We can't have a real horse and we can't have a pantomime horse or else we'll have to have a pantomime Rat and Mole and Badger."

"Who is this idiot?" would have been a permissible response, but Nicholas Hytner patiently explained that there were several actors who looked like carthorses and who would take the part very well. It was all so simple, just as long as one used the imagination.

I set this down more or less as it happened, in case there should be any budding playwrights more tentative than I am. It's unlikely. I've been at it now for twenty-five years and if I still can't stretch my mind to envisage a man playing a horse, what have I learned?

After that, though, it all came much easier. When the motor car appeared, I just wrote "*a motor car comes on*", and likewise with the barge. The only thing the designer Mark Thompson was dubious about – on grounds of expense – was the railway train, but by that time I had got the bit between my teeth and wrote the scene in which Toad is rescued by the train with the note: "I think you can suggest a train with clouds of steam, hooters, etc." Et cetera.

These props, and particularly the car and the train, were splendidly done and handsomely finished. As Griff Rhys Jones (who played Toad) remarked, most stage props look worse the closer you get to them, whereas these stood up to the actors' closest scrutiny, being beautifully detailed in places (such as the dashboard of the car) that the audience can scarcely hope to see.

To understand the technical side of the production, one needs to know that the stage of the Olivier comprises an inner circle and an outer circle. The meadow on which much of the action takes place was built on the inner circle; round and slightly crumpled in appearance, it was generally referred to by the crew as "The Poppadum". Around this, the outer circle – a rim about six and a half feet wide – did duty as river or road. Both inner and outer circles can revolve in either direction, and the inner circle can rise or fall, either one half at a time or in one piece, when it resembles a huge hollow drum. Thus when the scene changed to Rat's house, the inner circle revolved and the drum rose at the same time, to reveal the interior of the house beneath the meadow, the combination of the stage rising and revolving making the scene appear to spiral up into view. A similar transformation took place when Rat and Mole were taken into Badger's house, with the bonus that, while Badger, Rat and Mole were sitting cosily by the fire on a level with the audience, one could still see, up above, the Chief Weasel and Weasel Norman keeping their chilly watch in the Wild Wood.

Mark Thompson's costumes incorporated some of the animals' natural appearance – Rat's tail, for instance, and his outsize ears – but not so as to obliterate the actors' human

features. Jane Gibson taught the cast the movements of the various creatures they were representing: the linear shufflings of the hedgehogs, the dozy lollopings of the rabbits, the sinuous dartings of the weasels and so on.

Younger actors take to this kind of thing more readily than their seniors. Michael Bryant, playing Badger, was initially sceptical and avoided the movement classes; then, in an apparent excess of enthusiasm, he asked if he could take home the various videos depicting badger activity. When he came in the next day, he handed back the videos, saying, "I've studied all these films of the way badgers move, and I've discovered an extraordinary thing: they move exactly like Michael Bryant." But to most of the actors, some of whom were doubling as different creatures, the animal movement classes were of great value. For example, one could see in David Bamber's Mole that his get-up as an old-fashioned northern schoolboy did not entirely displace the shy, scuttling creature with splayed hands and feet, which people were always after for a waistcoat.

I have tried to do a faithful adaptation of the book while, at the same time, not being sure what a faithful adaptation is. One that remains true to the spirit of the book, most people would say. Well, *The Wind in the Willows* is a lyrical book, and the first casualties, if the book is to work on the stage, were those descriptive passages that give it its lyrical flavour. The splendid music Jeremy Sams wrote helped to compensate for this loss, and his lyrics too – which he dashed off with such speed that I felt, had he had a couple of hours to spare, he could have adapted the whole thing.

Still, the play is nowhere near as gentle and atmospheric as the book. No matter, other people would say, its special charm lies in the characters. But to adapt the text on that principle is not straightforward either, as the tale is very episodic. Rat and Mole disappear for long stretches, as does Badger, and it is not until Toad's adventures get under way that there is anything like a continuous narrative. It was for this reason, I imagine, that A. A. Milne called his adaptation *Toad of Toad Hall*, whereas to many readers of the book it is Rat and Mole who hold the story together.

The most substantial cut I made had been made by Milne too – namely, the chapter entitled "Wayfarers All", in which Rat encounters a seagoing cousin. Milne also omitted the mystical

chapter "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn", but this I did include, though I'm not sure what children made of it in the play – or make of it in the book, for that matter. In the play, Pan was heard but not seen, which is just as well: Grahame's description – "the rippling muscles on the arm that lay across the broad chest... the splendid curves of the shaggy limbs disposed in majestic ease on the sward" – makes him sound too much like Mellors the gamekeeper. Both chapters, incorporated into *The Wind in the Willows* at a late stage, recall the kind of pieces Grahame began writing when he worked at the Bank, and which were collected in his first book, *Pagan Papers*.

I ended up making the play the story of a group of friends, with the emphasis on Mole. He is the newcomer who takes us into this world of water and woods and weasels, and whose education is the thread that runs through it all. *The Wind in the Willows* is Mole's *Bildungsroman*. Mole is the only one of the characters I have allowed to have doubts. He doubts if he is having a good time, doubts if he is happy with Rat. He likes Toad as he is, and when the old show-off reforms, it all seems rather dull – have they done the right thing by taking him in hand? Rat and Badger have no doubts, but at the finish, Mole is still wondering.

Jokes apart, the only element in the production that I brought up to date was the Wild Wooders. In the book they are an occasional presence, but for the play Nicholas Hytner felt that they should be a constant threat, lurking in the background even at the most idyllic moments, and at one point going so far as to carry off a baby rabbit for their supper – an incident that shocked adults in the audience more than it did children.

In Grahame's day, the Wild Wooders were taken to represent the threat to property posed by the militant proletariat – a view, whatever one's political persuasion, that would be hard to maintain today. Our Wild Wooders ended up as property speculators and estate agents, spivs and ex-bovver-boys, who put Toad Hall through a programme of "calculated decrepitude" in the hope of depressing its market value. Their plan is to turn it into a nice mix of executive dwellings and office accommodation, shove on a marina and a cafe or two and market it as the "Toad Hall Park and Leisure Centre" – "The horror! The horror!" groans Badger. But the reformed Toad's vision of his ancestral home as a venue for opera, chamber concerts and even actors

' one- man shows does not commend itself to Badger either. "Actors!" he moans, and we know that, before long, he will be loping back to the Wild Wood.

Albert the horse is a nod in the direction of A. A. Milne. Graham has a horse in the book to pull Toad's caravan, but he does not give him a name or a voice. In *Toad of Toad Hall*, the horse is called Alfred and is a bit of a pedant. I have made him, in another nod to Milne, extremely lugubrious – Eeyore's Wolverhampton cousin. Toad can never remember his name and keeps calling him Alfred, which is not surprising as he is probably remembering him from the other play.

In the blurb written for his publishers, Grahame said that his book was "clean of the clash of sex". What this means is that women do not get a look in. There are only three of them to speak of – the washerwoman, the bargewoman and the gaoler's daughter – and only the last is seen in a kindly light. One reviewer of the play described these three as "coarse human females, coarsely characterized; they seem to come from another production". No, just from the text, much as Grahame wrote it, where the female sex is generally rubbished. One of the indictments against Toad is that, owing to his car crashes, he has had to spend weeks in hospital "being ordered about by female nurses". In addition, he has been "jeered at, and ignominously flung in the water – by a woman, too!" Even Toad, who rather fancies the gaoler's daughter, joins in the game. "You know what girls are, ma'am," he says to the bargewoman. "Nasty little hussies, that's what I call 'em."

Toad is pretending, but not so Rat, Mole and Badger, all of them confirmed bachelors. Bachelordom is a status that had more respect (and fewer undertones) in Grahame's day than it has now, and certainly he seems to have regarded it as the ideal state from which he had disastrously fallen. Of course, some bachelors are more confirmed than others, and the bachelordoms of Mole, Rat and Badger differ – or I have made them differ. Mole is a bachelor by circumstance, taking his cue from his surroundings. Rat is a single creature and so Mole is happy to be single, too, and set up home with his new friend – though as properly as Morecambe with Wise or Abbott with Costello. But had Mole popped up on that spring morning and found Rat in a cosy family set-up, he could have fitted in there just as well.

Judging by the way he makes himself readily at home at Rat's and then at Badger's, Mole is just a natural *ami de maison*.

Rat is solitary by circumstance but also by temperament. He could be played like Field Marshal Montgomery, and as with Monty, there may once have been a great love in his life that he has had to bury. He is certainly a romantic, but his rules and rigidities protect him – have perhaps been devised to protect him – from his own feelings. He's not quite a Crocker-Harris, but certainly a Mr Chips.

Badger has something of the old schoolmaster about him, too. He's less buttoned up than Ratty and because not repressed at all, more innocent. All he gets up to is pinching Mole's cheek and rubbing his little toes – behaviour that was quite commonplace in old gentlemen when I was a boy, when such things were not thought to matter much and were shrugged off by the recipient as just another of the ways that grown-ups were boring.

To fans of the book, even to discuss these well-loved characters in such terms might seem, if not sacrilege, at any rate silly. But an adapter has to ask questions and speculate about the characters in order to make the play work. If presented on stage in the same way as in the book, Rat, Mole and Badger would find it hard to retain an audience's attention because they are so relentlessly nice. Badger is a bit gruff, and Rat can be a little tetchy, but that is as far as it goes; all the faults that make for an interesting character are reserved for Toad.

I felt that the atmosphere of the River Bank had to be less serene, and that, while retaining their innocence and lack of insight into themselves, Rat and Mole and – to a lesser extent – Badger should be prey to more complicated feelings, particularly jealousy. Thus Mole's arrival on the River Bank to become Rat's new friend is not quite the untroubled idyll it is in the book. It is not long before Mole wants to meet Badger, and of course, he turns out to be a big hit there, too. So now Mole is Badger's friend as well as Rat's, and we go into a routine of "He's more my friend than he is yours – and anyway, I met him first!" It is a routine children are accustomed to and it is not unknown to grown-ups, particularly in some of life's backwaters – and the River Bank, despite Rat's protestations, can be a bit on the dull side. Newcomers there are eagerly gobbled up, as newcomers always have been in novels of provincial life, from Jane Austen to Barbara Pym.

Toad presents a different problem, and as much for the actor as for the dramatist. It is not that, like Mole and Rat, he is too nice, though Grahame is at pains to emphasize that he is nice and, for all his boasting, a good fellow underneath. It is just that we are told before he appears that he is conceited, a show-off and a creature of crazes; then, when he does arrive, he is all these things and goes on being all these things, with none of his disastrous adventures resulting in any disillusionment at all, still less self-knowledge. Finally, and suddenly, at the end of the book he is confronted by the trip of friends and, overnight, becomes a changed character.

Now this is no use to the dramatist at all, and no pushover for the actor either. Characters in a play need to go on a journey, even if it's only from A to B. Mole's journey is a gradual schooling at the hands of Rat in the ways of the River Bank; Rat's journey (in my adaptation) is an emotional schooling at the hands of Mole; Badger's journey is from solitude to society. But Toad does not go on a journey at all – he goes on his travels, but he does not go on a journey. Until his transformation, he is the same at the end of the book as he is at the beginning; life has taught him nothing.

But unchanging as he is and in defiance of all the rules of drama, children love him, and since Toad has so much of the action, even adults don't mind, until by the end, nobody – adults or children – wants him to change. Nor does he in my version – he just learns to keep it under.

"Keeping it under" is partly what *The Wind in the Willows* is about. There is a Toad in all of us, or certainly in all men, our social acceptability dependent on how much of our Toad we can keep hidden. Mole, by nature shy and humble, has no trouble fitting in; Toad, with neither of these virtues, must learn to counterfeit them before he is accepted. It is one of the useful dishonesties he might have learned at public school (where it is known as "having the corners knocked off"). Humphrey Carpenter says of Toad that one could imagine him having a brief spell at Eton or Harrow before being expelled – too soon to have learned the social lie that the play teaches him.

TOAD I say, Ratty, why didn't you tell me before?

RAT Tell you what?

TOAD About not showing off, being humble and shy and nice.

RAT I did tell you.

TOAD Yes, but what you didn't say was that this way I get more attention than ever. Everybody loves me! It's wonderful!

When I first read the book it seemed to me that Grahame meant Toad to be Jewish. He had endowed him with all the faults that genteel Edwardian antisemitism attributed to nouveaux-riches Jews. He is loud and shows off; he has too much money for his own good and no sense of social responsibility to go with it, and this sense of social responsibility is another lesson he has to learn. The fact that, whenever Grahame has the animals discuss Toad's character, they end up saying what a decent fellow he is underneath it all only seemed to confirm this analysis, and I thought that Grahame must have been thinking of characters like Sir Ernest Cassel and the Sassoons, the friends and financiers of Edward VII, who moved at the highest levels of society but were still regarded as outsiders. So when I read *The Wind in the Willows* for the BBC, I gave Toad something of a flavour which, if not Jewish, was at least exotic – trying to make his r's sound like Tom Stoppard's, for instance. I expected some criticism for this (not from Tom Stoppard), but none came, and now, having adapted the book for the stage, I am less sure anyway. The text is so full of inconsistencies. Grahame himself may not have known – "He is and he isn't" as so often the proper answer to such questions.

The nearest Oscar Wilde gets to the River Bank was his remark about ducks. "You will never be in the best society," he has a mother say to her ducklings, "unless you can learn to stand on your heads." In Toad, there are echoes of Wilde, and not only in his disgrace and imprisonment. Many of Wilde's epigrams would not be out of place at Toad Hall – "If the lower orders don't set us a good example, what on earth is the use of them?" or "I live wholly for pleasure; pleasure is the only thing one should live for." I am not sure that Toad thinks of himself as an artist (though he has been told that he ought to have a salon), but if he did, it would only be as a motorist ("Is motoring an art?" "The way I do it, yes.") Occasionally he manages an epigram of his own that is worthy of Wilde. "I have an aunt who is a washerwoman," says the gaoler's daughter. "Think no more about it," replies Toad consolingly, "I have several aunts who

ought to be washerwomen." But then Toad's gaol cannot have been far from Reading.

At the finish, I have the gaoler's daughter kiss Toad, who does not turn into a prince but straightaway wants Rat to taste the joys of kissing, just as he had once wanted him to share the joys of caravanning. Rat, of course, is reluctant, but finds to his surprise there may be something in this kissing business after all, and generous animal that he is, he wants Mole initiated, too. So the play ends with a hint of new horizons. It is a large departure from the text, of course, where all four of our heroes are left in bachelor bliss, but this alteration is not entirely without justification, echoing as it does the course of Grahame's own life. Courtship and marriage were late joys for him, too, and not such joys either, but that ' s another story and not one, as I said at the start, that I managed to tell.

My additions and alterations to *The Wind in the Willows* are, I am sure, as revealing of me as the original text is of Grahame. Grahame knew this very well. "You must please remember," he wrote:

"that a theme, a thesis, is in most cases little more than a sort of clothes line on which one pegs a string of ideas, quotations, allusions and so on, one's mental undergarments of all shapes and sizes, some possibly fairly new but most rather old and patched; and they dance and sway in the breeze and flap and flutter, or hang limp and lifeless; and some are ordinary enough, and some are of private and intimate shape, and rather give the owner away, and show up his or her peculiarities. And owing to the invisible clothes line they seem to have some connection and continuity.

"Peculiarities or not, I imagine most writers are gratified that there is an invisible clothes line, if only because it suggests there are things going on in their heads that they are unaware of. Who knows, these unintended recurrences might amount, if not to Significance, then at least to Subtext. The only other piece of mine that has been performed at the National Theatre was my double bill *Single Spies* in 1988. However, it was not until I was adapting *The Wind in the Willows* that I remembered that Guy Burgess, the protagonist of *An Englishman Abroad*, had, in his final rumbustious days at the Washington Embassy, acquired a 12-cylinder Lincoln convertible in which he had

frequent mishaps. “He drove it,” said Lord Greenhill, a fellow diplomat, “just like Mr Toad.” Poop poop.

“This adaptation was adapted, more than most plays are, in rehearsal, and owes a great deal to Nicholas Hytner, Jeremy Sams and the cast and crew of the original production. I would like to thank them all.”

Alan Bennett, January 1991

The text of *The Wind in the Willows* printed here is a slightly shortened version of my original adaptation. In 1994 the play, which was originally produced in the Royal National Theatre’s Olivier auditorium, transferred to the Old Vic, where this shortened text was used.

There were, of course, other changes as, besides being a proscenium theatre, the Old Vic lacks the elaborate stage machinery which figured so prominently in the Olivier production. The set at the Old Vic retained The Poppadum, the crumpled circular disc which was the central feature of the original set; slightly raked in the Olivier, it was raked much more steeply at the Old Vic so that beneath the upstage edge could be set Rat’s house (and in turn the houses of Badger and Mole), to be revealed when the stage revolved. So, though less complicated than the Ohvier production, the Old Vic version still managed to be pretty spectacular, with plenty of surprises up its sleeve. It was designed, as was the original production, by Mark Thompson and directed by Jeremy Sams, who also wrote the music, the lyrics for the songs and, if left to himself, could probably have played all the parts too.

My stage directions are designed to read as text rather than as a blueprint for future productions. The play is quite a formidable undertaking and presents many problems which future casts and directors (and may there be many of them) will solve in different ways. I just hope that they will have as much fun doing the play as we all did at the National Theatre and the Old Vic.

The first actor to play Toad at the Old Vic was Jeremy Sinden. He was, on his own (not at all rueful) admission, tailor-made for the part, which he had asked particularly to be allowed to play. What few people in the production knew was that just before the first rehearsal he had been told that he might not have long to live. Giving no hint of this, he turned in a series of magnificent performances for as long as he was able, while

undergoing treatment at weekends. His Toad was a kind of swansong, done with courage, modesty and self-denial, qualities, of course, which were the very opposite of the character he had so longed to play. He died on 29 May 1996.

Alan Bennett, June 1996

PART ONE

It is a spring morning on the River Bank and the locals are going about their (not very pressing) business. A troop of **RABBITS** *lollops by, followed by a line of* **HEDGEHOGS**, *and then come some* **SQUIRRELS**. *All the River Bank animals seem to patronize the same outfitter, who has kitted them out in a special brand of tweeds that manages to accommodate both tails and ears. Thus the small tails of the* **RABBITS** *come through their skirts or breeches as do the long plumed tails of the* **SQUIRRELS**. *The* **RABBITS** *wear hats that allow their ears free play but the* **HEDGEHOGS** *don't wear hats on account of their spiky hair.*

Some of the **SQUIRREL** *children start scuffling with the young* **RABBITS** *and a row seems about to break out when everyone's attention is distracted by the sudden eruption, brush in hand, of* **MOLE**. **MOLE** *has close-cropped black hair, a blazer and sandals. He wears NHS spectacles and though he is a mole he could also be an old-fashioned northern schoolboy.*

MOLE Hang spring cleaning! And hang whitewashing! Oh the light! The air! The *freedom*.

RABBIT ROBERT Where do you think you're going? You can't come through here.

MOLE Why? You don't own the place.

RABBIT ROBERT I do actually. It'll cost you sixpence.

MOLE Onion sauce!

RABBIT ROBERT Don't you onion sauce me. This is private property.

RABBIT ROSE That's right. You have to pay a toll.

RABBIT ROBERT At least if you're a mole.

RABBIT ROSE And haven't stayed in your hole.

MOLE Well I won't pay.

RABBIT ROBERT He won't pay.

RABBIT ROSE Why won't he pay?

RABBIT ROBERT Why won't you pay?

MOLE I've no money – bunny.

RABBIT ROBERT He's no money.

RABBIT ROSE Oh well – we'll overlook it just this once.

RABBIT ROBERT Yes, particularly since you're new round here – but remember, it is private property. Some people. Honestly.

MOLE Hey, Flopsy.

RABBIT ROBERT Are you speaking to us?

MOLE What's this?

RABBIT ROSE What's what?

MOLE This. This long – sliding – gurgling thing?

RABBIT ROSE What is it? Well it's a river.

RABBIT ROBERT Never come across one before, have you?

MOLE No.

RABBIT ROBERT So much for onion sauce. The ignorance of some people.

MOLE But – it's – it's wonderful.

RABBIT ROSE Is it? I've always thought it a bit ordinary.

MOLE *is still gazing wonderingly at the river.*

RAT *rows into view.* **RAT**, *being something of a sailor, wears a navy-blue blazer and yachting cap. But for his ears, which are rather larger than normal, and the long tail (which he tucks in his pocket) he might be a naval officer who has taken early retirement.*

RABBITS *(to* **RAT***)* Morning, Mr Rat.

RAT *(to* **RABBITS***)* Good morning. *(to* **MOLE***)* Hello.

MOLE Hello.

RAT You're Mole, aren't you?

MOLE That's right, you're Rat.

RAT That's right. How d'you do. Well, this is an unexpected pleasure. A bit far from home, aren't we? Never seen you around here before.

MOLE No. I've – I've taken the day off.

RAT Taken the day off! I say, that's bold.

MOLE That's a lovely boat!

RAT Well, I like it.

MOLE I've never been in a boat.

RAT I'm sorry. I thought for a moment you said you'd never been in a boat.

MOLE I haven't.

RAT Bless my soul.

MOLE Why? Is it so nice?

RAT Nice? No, it's not nice. It's the only thing. Believe me, my young friend, there is nothing, absolutely nothing half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats. In them or out of them, whether you get away or you don't, or whether you never get anywhere at all, there's always something to do, you're always busy. But nice, that's not the

half of it. Listen, if you've nothing else on this morning, what say we drop down the river together and make a day of it?

MOLE In the boat? Together? Could we? Could we really?

RAT Certainly. Hop in.

MOLE *gets into the boat.*

Careful. Splendid.

RAT *hands* **MOLE** *a hamper.*

Put that on your lap.

MOLE What's in it?

RAT Our lunch. There's cold chicken, cold ham, cold tongue, cold beef, pickled gherkin, sausage rolls, cress sandwiches, ginger beer, lemonade...

MOLE Oh stop, stop. This is too much.

RAT Do you really think so? It's only what I always take. The other animals are always saying I'm a mean beast, and cut it very fine. Comfy?

MOLE Rather.

RAT Right. Off we go.

MOLE So this is a river.

RAT My dear Mole, if I may correct you. Not a river. *The* river.

MOLE And you really live by the river? What a jolly life.

RAT By it and with it and on it and in it. It's my world and I don't want any other.

MOLE Isn't it a bit dull at times?

RAT Dull?

MOLE Just you and the river and no one else to chat to...

RAT No one else? My dear fellow, the bank is so crowded nowadays, some people are moving away altogether.

MOLE What's over there?

RAT Where?

MOLE There. That dark place on the horizon.

RAT Oh – nothing.

MOLE Yes there is. It's – a wood.

He stands up to get a better view.

RAT Don't stand up, you idiot. You'll have the boat over.

MOLE *sits down again. Pause.*

Sorry about that. My fault. Shouldn't have called you an idiot. Only Rule One where boats are concerned is "Never stand up".

MOLE Sorry.

RAT This looks a good spot. What say we pitch camp here? Steady as she goes. That's it. Make a sailor of you yet. You unpack the hamper and I'll lay the tablecloth. Peckish?

MOLE A bit. Well, a lot actually.

RAT Well, we won't stand on ceremony. Tuck in.

MOLE *reaches into the hamper.*

Only, Mole. Manners. Napkin first.

MOLE Oh sorry. Sorry.

RAT Allow me.

RAT *tucks in* **MOLE***'s napkin.*

Now eat away!

They start to eat, observed somewhat sceptically, by **HEDGEHOG HERBERT** *and* **RABBIT RONALD.**

HEDGEHOG HERBERT They seem to have clicked.

RABBIT RONALD The old fellow's probably lonely. Wants a bit of company.

HEDGEHOG HERBERT Somebody to rabbit on to.

RABBIT RONALD Do you mind. I find that remark rather offensive.

MOLE *is still fascinated with the distant wood.*

RAT What is it, old chap?

MOLE Nothing.

RAT All right, I'll tell you what it is. It's called the Wild Wood – and it's just that we River Bankers don't go there very much.

MOLE Why? Aren't they nice people?

RAT We-ell, let's see. The squirrels are all right. And the rabbits, I suppose. Then there's Badger, of course. He's all right. He lives bang in the middle of it, and wouldn't live anywhere else. Dear old Badger. Nobody takes any liberties with him.

MOLE Why? Who would—

RAT It's the others you see – the ferrets, the stoats and, worst of all, the weasels. And yet they're all right most of the time. One passes the time of day, "Morning, Rat", "Morning Weasel" – but just occasionally they – break out.

Hearing themselves talked about, the **WEASELS** *put in a brief appearance. They too have tails and whiskers but in every other respect, camel-hair coats, Homburg hats and co-respondent shoes, they are gangsters.*

Another sausage roll?

MOLE When? When do they – break out?

RAT Mole. Can I say something? One of the ways we animals have the edge on our human friends and why we're happier than they are is that we don't dwell on possible trouble ahead. Sometimes we need reminding about that, don't we?

MOLE Sorry, Rat.

RAT It's a question of manners, really. I find most things are. Apple pie?

MOLE But, Rat—

RAT Mole, please.

MOLE —but what's beyond the Wild Wood?

RAT Beyond the Wild Wood comes the Wide World. And that's another topic we avoid. Point taken, Mole?

MOLE Sorry... *(pause)* Rat.

RAT What is it now?

MOLE I'm not sure this isn't something else I ought not to mention, but there are some bubbles in the water.

RAT Bubbles? Oh Lord! Clear the food! Quick!

MOLE Why? What's the matter?

RAT Too late.

OTTER, *wearing a striped Victorian bathing suit, has catapulted out of the water and stands in the middle of the picnic, shaking water over everything.*

OTTER Hello – what's all this? It's a picnic? Rat, you sly beggar. I don't recall receiving an invitation.

RAT Because I knew you'd turn up. You never stand on ceremony, though you have stood on Mr Mole's sausage roll.

OTTER Oh gosh, have I? And we haven't even been introduced.

OTTER *picks up the sausage roll and begins to eat it.*

RAT Otter, may I present Mr Mole, the wreck of whose sausage roll is now going down your throat.

OTTER Delighted to make your acquaintance *(eating the sausage roll)* Not wrecked at all. Flavour rather improved, I'd say. Is that bloater paste? Splendid!

RAT Really!

OTTER Take no notice of Rat. Old comrades-in-arms, Rat and I. Is he looking after you?

MOLE I'm having a wonderful time.

A small child with goggles and water wings and a large "L" on his back struggles up on to the bank.

OTTER This is Portly, my youngest. He's just had his first swimming lesson.

RAT Well, Portly. What did you think of the water?

PORTLY Wet, sir.

RAT Make you hungry, did it? Fancy some potted meat?

PORTLY Oh yes, sir.

RAT Well, tuck in, tuck in.

PORTLY *takes a sandwich.*

OTTER What do you say, Portly?

PORTLY Thank you, sir.

RAT Who's out on the river today?

OTTER Who's not out, you mean. Talk about cheek by jowl. Never known the place so crowded. And Toad's out for one.

MOLE Who's Toad?

RAT Was he in the punt?

OTTER No. The skiff. I said to him, "Where's the punt?" He said, "What punt?" I said, "You had a punt." He said, "Did I?" I said, "Well, I thought you did." Turns out he'd been showing the punt off to the ducks and ran it over the weir. Mind you, he was already getting bored with it. You know Toad.

RAT It's the houseboat saga all over again.

OTTER First of all it was sailing—

RAT —then came the houseboat and we all had to go and stay with him on the houseboat—

MOLE Oh how lovely...

RAT —and pretend we liked the houseboat. He was going to spend the rest of his life in a houseboat. It's the same whatever he takes up.

OTTER He's lucky to have the money to do it.

MOLE Has he got a lot of money?

OTTER Toad's a good fellow, I'm not saying that. Just – unreliable. *(His attention is caught by something on the river.)* We must go. In you get, Portly.

PORTLY Must I?

OTTER Yes, and sharpish. Our lunch is rapidly disappearing upstream.

OTTER *somersaults back into the river.*

PORTLY Thank you for the potted meat, sir.

PORTLY *holds his nose and nervously jumps in.*

RAT Time we were moving on.

RAT *and* **MOLE** *pack up.*

MOLE His *lunch?* What was the bloater paste?

RAT Oh that was just a snack. No. What otters really like are mayflies.

MOLE Can I row on the way back?

RAT Not yet, old chap. Have a few lessons first. I tell you, it's not as easy as it looks. Anyway the current's with us, so I'll just let her drift. No rush on the river, you see.

They drift back down the river, **RAT** *resting on the oars and* **MOLE** *in the prow.*

I've never told anyone this before, Mole, but I'm a bit of a poet.

MOLE Well I wouldn't worry about it. It's probably just a stage. I once had a shot at the trombone.

RAT I feel there's a poem waiting to be written about ducks.

MOLE Ducks?

RAT

ALL ALONG THE BACKWATER
THROUGH THE RUSHES TALL
DUCKS ARE A-DABBLING—

MOLE They're what?

RAT Dabbling.

MOLE Oh, I thought you said gabbling. It could be gabbling, couldn't it?

RAT Yes. But I think dabbling's better. Now I've lost my thread.

ALL ALONG THE BACKWATER
THROUGH THE RUSHES TALL
DUCKS ARE A-DABBLING –
UP TAILS ALL.

Here we are. Home.

MOLE *starts to step out of the boat.*

Watch out...!

MOLE *gets one foot on the bank and one foot in the boat, and the boat moves or the bank moves, but either way he ends up getting his feet wet.*

Oh, you silly creature. Are you wet?

MOLE Only my foot.

RAT Well, come inside and dry off – and since it's getting late, would it be a good idea if you stopped with me for a bit? Would you like that?

MOLE Like it? Oh, Rat. I'd love it.

RAT Jolly good.

RAT*'s house, like his clothes, has a distinctly nautical flavour. It's as much a cabin as a room, with the portholes and lots of brass and polished wood; on the wall are a barometer and some ceremonial oars, and the seating accommodation is two folding steamer chairs with neat blue cushions.* **MOLE** *is bowled over.*

It's not exactly luxury's lap, I'm afraid.

MOLE I've never seen such a nice house.

RAT Yes, well, to tell you the truth, I am rather proud of it. Now here's a towel – and don't forget between the toes.

MOLE Yes, Rat.

RAT And, Mole.

MOLE Yes?

RAT There's no need to keep calling me Rat. It's a bit – well – formal. My friends call me Ratty. Could you manage that, do you think?

MOLE Oh yes – Ratty...

RAT What about you? Do you have a pet name?

MOLE I've never had a friend before. My brothers used to call me Moley.

RAT Moley. I like that. Now pop into bed and then I'll bring you a little smackerel of something.

RAT *shows* **MOLE** *his berth in the adjoining cabin and he is bowled over afresh.* **MOLE** *gets into bed.*

MOLE Oh, it's lovely.

RAT Yes, I think you'll be comfortable. I'll get you a hot brick to warm your toes.

MOLE Oh, Ratty. It's been a wonderful day.

He falls asleep.

RAT It has been nice, hasn't it. Got everything you want?

No answer.

Good Lord, little chap's asleep. I'll say goodnight then, Moley. Good night.

Moley.

Now that **MOLE** *is asleep,* **RAT** *is free to try out the name of his new friend,* **MOLEY**.

Finding he likes it he nods to himself and puts the light out.

As **RAT** *and his new friend disappear from view the* **HEDGEHOG** *and the* **RABBIT** *pass judgement.*

HEDGEHOG HERBERT It won't last, you know. Won't even last the summer.

RABBIT RONALD Really? Why not?

HEDGEHOG HERBERT Rat's too prickly.

RABBIT RONALD You're one to talk.

HEDGEHOG HERBERT Why?

RABBIT RONALD You're a hedgehog.

HEDGEHOG HERBERT Do you mind. I find that remark rather offensive.

Summer has gone and the River Bankers are busy with the autumn harvest as **RAT** *and* **MOLE** *stroll towards Toad Hall.*

RAT Do you write poetry, Moley?

MOLE You've asked me before, Ratty. No.

RAT I do. *(to someone passing)* Good morning!

MOLE I can't wait to see Toad Hall.

RAT Not far now. (*indicating a* **RABBIT***)* Do you see this rabbit? The father got made into a pie last week. *(very brightly to the* **RABBIT***)* Hello! *(to* **MOLE***)* As a matter of fact, I've just finished a poem today.

MOLE Is it about ducks?

RAT How on earth did you know that?

MOLE I sort of guessed.

RAT Would you like me to recite it?

MOLE Would you like to recite it?

RAT Oh, well, if you insist.

ALL ALONG THE BACKWATER
THROUGH THE RUSHES TALL,
DUCKS ARE A-DABBLING,
UP TAILS ALL!

DUCKS' TAILS, DRAKES' TAILS
YELLOW FEET A-QUIVER,
YELLOW BILLS ALL OUT OF SIGHT
BUSY IN THE RIVER!

SLUSHY GREEN UNDERGROWTH
WHERE THE ROACH SWIM
HERE WE KEEP OUR LARDER
COOL AND FULL AND DIM.

EVERYONE FOR WHAT HE LIKES!
WE LIKE TO BE
HEADS DOWN, TAILS UP
DABBLING FREE!

The **RABBITS** *and* **HEDGEHOGS** *have formed up behind* **RAT** *and they take up the chorus as the scene changes, and to a burst of English Heritage music the towers and terraces of Toad Hall rise slowly into* ***view.***

"DUCKS' DITTY"

ALL

DABBLING FREE! (AH)
ALL ALONG THE BACKWATER,
THROUGH THE RUSHES TALL
DUCKS ARE A-DABBLING,
UP TAILS ALL!

RAT And here we are at Toad Hall.

MOLE My goodness!

RAT Yes. It really is one of the nicest houses in these parts, though don't say that in front of Toad.

MOLE Why?

RAT Toad is a lovely creature and very good-natured but – well, he's not very clever and he does tend to be just a trifle boastful.

MOLE He must be very rich. What does he do?

RAT Nothing very much. His father was rich, you see, so he doesn't have to earn money, though he's quite good at spending it.

RAT*'s enthusiasm tails off as* **TOAD** *appears. While* **TOAD** *is dressed like a country gentleman in a loud suit of plus-fours, his green hair and large, round glasses stamp him as a* **TOAD.**

TOAD Ratty! Good morning. No, don't tell me. This is Mr Mole. We meet at last! How do you do. I'm told you've given the old rascal a new lease of life. And what do you think of my humble home, Mr Mole?

MOLE It's magnificent.

TOAD Yes, it's been said that it's the finest house on the whole of the river, and (some would say) anywhere else.

RAT *nudges* **MOLE.**

I saw that, Ratty. He's warning you that I show off, Mr Mole. And I do from time to time. But it's only my way. Some people are modest. Some people are not. And I'm not. Why should I be? I've nothing to be modest about. But listen. This is most important. You have to help me. Both of you.

RAT With your rowing, I suppose. Well, you're getting on fairly well, though you still splash a bit.

TOAD Rat, stop. Boating – pooh. A footling amusement. I can see it suits you, but in a curious way I find I've somehow – outgrown it. Prepare yourselves for a revelation. Shut your eyes. I've now hit on the real thing – something to which I want to devote the rest of my life.

A gypsy caravan is brought on, pulled by **ALBERT** *the horse.*

RAT Good Lord.

MOLE Oh, it's beautiful. Ratty, isn't it beautiful!

RAT *(drily)* Lovely.

TOAD That's the real life for you, Rat – the open road, the dusty highway – go inside, my young friend.

MOLE *goes into the caravan.*

The heath, the common, the hedgerow. Here today and somewhere else tomorrow. Travel, change, interest, excitement.

MOLE *(pushing his head out of a skylight)* Come in, Ratty. You won't believe it – there's little bunks and a cooking stove and lockers and bookshelves, and it's all so snug.

TOAD I see your young friend is a person of taste, Ratty. Sardines, Mr Mole? You'll find some in the locker. Or a chocolate biscuit. Or both. I promise you nothing whatever has been forgotten. Now I suggest we start off in what – half an hour?

MOLE Oh yes. Yes, please.

RAT Did I hear you say something about "we" and "start"?

TOAD Now my dear, good old Ratty, don't go all stiff and huffy. You've got to come. You can't mean to stick to your dull old river all your life and just live in a hole in the bank and boat?

RAT Why not?

TOAD But, Rat, Mole – I am going to show you the World.

RAT I do not want to see the World. From what I've seen of it so far, it has very little to recommend it. Everybody *doing* things, getting somewhere.

TOAD You mean the rat race.

RAT I can't think why they call it *that.* Well, I'm not coming and that's flat. And what's more, Mole is not coming either, are you, Mole?

MOLE No. No, I'm not. Still, it does sound as if it might have been – well – rather fun.

RAT No. I belong here.

TOAD But Ratty, old chap. I want to show you an England you've only dreamed of – the England of heath and common and hedgerow. We will camp tonight on the downs, dine off chops, cheese, new bread, freshly churned butter and great swills of beer. And when we've done, we'll smoke a pipe and lie gazing up at the quiet stars that have shone down on this England of ours for thousands of years.

RAT Oh yes – yes – yes.

TOAD *(winking at* **MOLE***)* Never fails.

RAT Of course I'm still not keen myself, but since Moley clearly wants to go…

MOLE Only if you do, Ratty.

RAT And it may be I am a bit set in my ways.

TOAD Excellent. Could you just have a word with the horse. He's being rather tiresome. Meanwhile I'll go and change into my caravanning clothes.

TOAD *trots off to get into his togs.*

MOLE I didn't know there were caravanning clothes.

RAT Oh, there always have to be clothes for it, or Toad wouldn't want to do it. Now Albert, what's the matter?

ALBERT *is a Wolverhampton cousin of Eeyore.*

ALBERT It's Toad. He wants me to pull the caravan and I'm not supposed to pull things. Doctor's orders. When I pull things I pull other things. Like muscles.

MOLE *(moving to stroke* **ALBERT***)* Oh Albert.

ALBERT Now don't start all that stroking. I don't like being stroked. And don't start smacking me on the side of the neck either, still less on the bottom. Smack anybody else on the bottom and it's a punishment, whereas if you're a horse you're supposed to love it.

RAT Would you like a carrot?

ALBERT Yes, provided it's in a cream sauce or diced in a little *bouillon.* What I don't want is one of those mucky raw articles. That's another misconception. One carrot and they think you're anybody's. Are you going on this expedition?

MOLE Oh yes. It'll be fun.

ALBERT Fun for you. You're not pulling the cart.

TOAD *emerges in his caravanning outfit and gets on to the box.*

TOAD Ready then?

TOAD *smacks* **ALBERT.**

Time to go.

ALBERT There you are, you see. Smacks me on the bum. Listen, will you talk to me?

MOLE Of course I'll talk to you.

ALBERT Toad never does. His conversation is limited to "Gee up" and "Whoa!"

TOAD Gee up!

ALBERT Not my idea of a feast of reason and a flow of soul. Added to which, I never get no supper.

RAT Any supper. I never get any supper.

MOLE We'll talk to you and give you supper too.

ALBERT And when I say supper, I don't mean one of those nosebag things where you get your kippers all mixed up with the custard.

RAT Don't you worry.

MOLE *smacks him on the bottom.*

ALBERT There you go again! *Desist.*

With **MOLE** *holding the horse's head, the caravan proceeds on its way to the applause of the* **RABBITS** *and other well-wishers.*

ALL What a lovely caravan! Isn't she a spanker!

TOAD Not bad, is she — I can't believe she's all mine!

And some not so well-wishers.

CHIEF WEASEL Hello, Toady. Got yourself a horse and cart now?

TOAD Do you like it?

STOAT CYRIL What happened to the houseboat?

WEASEL NORMAN Yeah. And the bike?

WEASEL WILFRED And the punt?

CHIEF WEASEL Yeah, your punt, Toady. What happened to that?

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