

You Lucky People!

TOMMY TRINDER talks to Geoff Mellor about his Fifty Years in Show Business

NOW IT CAN BE TOLD! Just before the summer season show opened at the Hce Theatre in Plymouth, I spoke to the great Cockney comedian about his 50 years in the business. "Yes, release the story", he told me, and I did!

His summer show at Plymouth — **THE TOMMY TRINDER SHOW** presented by Jerry Jerome — has been described as "astonishingly successful" and the latest news is an offer to appear at Clacton next year. Tommy is still packing in the crowds, in fact he seems more popular than ever. His material is clean and clever.

Tommy Trinder's first appearance on any stage was at the age of 12 in a Kiddies Talent Competition, held at Collins Music Hall, in Islington. There he was seen by the great Will Murray who immediately engaged him for his *Casey's Court* company, then enjoying great success on the music halls. His first professional appearance with the *Casey's Court* company was at the Oldham Empire in June, 1921.

The great comedian talked to me at great length about his experiences down the years in Music Hall, both in this country and abroad, and many interesting stories emerged. Perhaps the most significant was the fact that there was a Chairman going strong at Barnard's in Chatham as late as 1923 (unfortunately Tommy could not recall the name) and Morris Abrahams's stock joke for poor weekly returns at the Queens' in Poplar — "The polo at Hurlingham is killing the business!"

Although a Londoner, Tommy has a soft spot for Yorkshire, especially Bradford, where theatrical writer J. C. Handby ("Mr. Dangle")

gave him his first good "write-up" in the Press. He was then a budding leading comedian aged 20. The show in which he was appearing was entitled *West End Scandals* at the old MacNaghten Palace Theatre, long since demolished. On the Monday evening a member of the city's Watch Committee took exception to a certain item in the show. This was "Living Studies" in which scantily-clad maidens impersonated famous works of art. After seeing the show, the Watch Committee member demanded to see Ali Ben Hassan who (according to the programme) produced these "studies". Acting under orders, Tommy blithely told the Councillor that Mr. Hassan was in Cairo and could not be contacted. In strict point of fact, there was no Mr. Hassan!

Although everyone thinks Tommy Trinder is a Fulhamite (he has been a director of Fulham Football Club for 30 years and Chairman for 15) he was actually born in Streatham, but the family moved to Fulham when Tommy was very young. He does not come from a theatrical family, for his father was a London County Council tram driver.

Arthur Askey is a great friend of Tommy Trinder's, both on stage and off. The pair met for the first time at Shanklin in the Isle of Wight in 1937. After a very successful season there, they both endowed a bed at the local hospital.

During his long stage career Tommy Trinder has appeared in every English-speaking country in the world and holds the personal record for shows at the London Palladium. Here he "starred" for two years and four months in the revue *Happy and Glorious*. On television he was the



first compere of the famous *Sunday Night at the London Palladium* series and on sound radio he has been heard many times in the popular programme *Does the Team Think?*

He has also appeared in ice shows and repertory, not to mention a season with Chipperfield's Circus! His several films include *The Bells Go Down*, *The Foreman Went to France* and his own particular favourite *Champagne Charlie*.

Tommy Trinder is indeed proud to have appeared in many Royal Variety Performances and equally proud of his association with the Grand Order of Water Rats who have elected him King Rat four times.

The Cockney comedian is indeed versatile and his success continues. Every Music Hall enthusiast will join me in Congratulations to Tommy after "Fifty Years in the Business". May "Trinder's the Name" be a byword in show-biz for a long time to come. . . .