

OCT's Next Production

**Off Centre Theatre**

Registered Charity No. 1112602

presents:



# Summer End

by

**Eric Chappell**

(Script writer of *Rising Damp*)

A comedy thriller,  
based around the  
growing friendship of  
two OAPs.



**Thursday - Friday - Saturday**

**October 26<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup>**

**Haberdashers' Monmouth  
School for Girls**

**7.30 pm**

Tickets £7.00  
are available from:

**Brian Williams Watch & Clock Repairs, St Mary Street  
and**

**The Nelson Museum 01600 710630**

**OCT Radio Times**

*28 and 29 September 2006*

# Horne a Plenty



*A tribute  
to Round  
the Horne*

**In OCT's Radio Studio,  
Agincourt Square at 7.30pm**

**With special thanks to  
Abergavenny Fine Foods  
for their support**

**Horne A Plenty** is Off Centre's tribute to one of the most enduring radio comedy shows of all time: **Round the Horne**

### Who was Kenneth Horne?

Kenneth Horne was an unlikely radio comedy actor. His persona was more that of a city businessman, which is precisely what he was. He started in business with Triplex Safety Glass and ended up as Chairman of Chad Valley Toys. In between times while serving in the RAF, he met Richard Murdoch the famous British character comedian who persuaded him to try his hand at broadcasting. He appeared with Murdoch in the largely forgotten wartime series "Ack Ack Beer Beer" and then the two collaborated on the much more memorable and highly successful post war "Much Blinding in the Marsh" which ran from 1947 to 1953. Horne then became the regular question master on the popular quiz show "Twenty Questions". He suffered a stroke in 1957 which curtailed his business career but allowed him more time to perform. The BBC commissioned a writer called Eric Merriman to devise a sketch show for Horne to front, and that became "Beyond Our Ken" which started in 1958. The pilot and parts of the first two series were co-written by Barry Took. The original cast included Ron Moody and Stanley Unwin but by the second series they had left and the "regulars", Kenneth Williams, Betty Marsden, Hugh Paddick and Bill Pertwee, had formed up. "Beyond Our Ken" was hugely popular and ran for seven series and 123 episodes from July 1958 until February 1964.

Kenneth Horne was quintessentially a radio performer. His timing and reading of a script were perfect. In 1968 he was given his own television show called "Horne a Plenty" but he was not so comfortable reading off the autocue and it ran for only one series.

### How did Round the Horne start?

In mid 1964 Eric Merriman and the BBC had a major falling out and he declined to write any more "Beyond Our Ken". The BBC wanted it, or something similar, to continue and contacted the other initial scriptwriter Barry Took who was now collaborating with Marty Feldman. They turned the BBC down as they were too busy. Fortunately for posterity they had a change of heart and wrote a pilot called "It's Ken Again". Re-titled "Round the Horne" the first episode was broadcast on March 7<sup>th</sup> 1965. At around that time of year for the next four years the airwaves were graced with, in all, 66 episodes. Indeed there were no plans for the series to end and a new one was being written when, in February 1969, Kenneth Horne died of a heart attack just short of his 62<sup>nd</sup> birthday. The production team quite rightly decided that no other front man could take his place

### What is Round the Horne's legacy?

Even now, forty years after it was first broadcast, the CD's and cassettes of the series are in constant demand. Virtually the entire catalogue has been released which confirms how durable it is. Part of the reason for this is because the humour is well ahead of its time. It is far more risqué and risky than "Beyond our Ken" for example. A new audience has been added as result of BBC7, and in 2005 a stage show called "Round the Horne Revisited" played to packed houses in London and on tour. Shamelessly Off Centre is now adding a further chapter to the show's history.

### Who were the original cast?

**Kenneth Williams:** A unique and irreplaceable character actor who needs no introduction. His performances and over-the-top persona graced radio and television for thirty years, until his untimely death in 1988.

**Betty Marsden:** Another of that repertory of character actors who cropped up in Carry On films and countless British comedies of the 50's and 60's. Her career would have been even more successful had she not been a contemporary of Hattie Jacques. She died in 1998.

**Hugh Paddick:** He also has a CV which covers radio, television, and film for five decades. He was in the original stage production of My Fair lady as well as Up Pompeii and Blackadder. He died in 2000.

**Bill Pertwee:** The only one of the team who is still alive. He is highly knowledgeable on the history of radio comedy and music hall and has written books on the subject.. He is known to a wider audience as the ARP Warden in many episodes of Dads Army.

**Douglas Smith:** The much put upon continuity announcer who was on the staff of the BBC Home Service for many years. The way he was integrated into the fabric of the show was one of its charms. He died in 1972.



### **Cast and Production Team for Tonight's Show**

#### **The Players:**

GORDON CASSON  
GINNY BLAKEY  
GEOFFREY MANNING  
CHRIS RYDE  
TONY WELLS

#### **Written by:**

BARRY TOOK and MARTY FELDMAN

#### **Music:**

ANNE MacFARLANE

#### **Stage Manager:**

CHARLES WINTOUR

**The show was compiled and directed by CHRIS RYDE**

#### **Caterers:**

Lesley Wells & Anne MacFarlane assisted by  
Barbara Spence & Sue Manning

#### **Thanks also to:**

Redbrook Village Hall, Monmouth Priory,  
Bridges Community Centre & Abergavenny  
Fine Foods

