

TALBOT ROTHWELL



Carry on Fulking! Now that's a title Carry On producer Peter Rogers would have died to have used! Talbot Rothwell, who wrote 20 of the 31 Carry On films, lived in Fulking for some years and built what is now the Malby Mansion—surely Jill and Ian will have kept the magnificent comedy wallpaper above! Tolly, as he was known to his friends was a regular at the Shepherd and Dog and a familiar presence around our village.

According to a profile of himself he once wrote, "Rothwell, was born at an early age to mixed parentage, one father, one mother", on the 17th November 1916 in Bromley, Kent. He claims to have dropped his first ghastly pun at the age of 9 after a unsuccessful newt-fishing trip, "No newts, is good newts!" which still made him smile enough to be included in CARRY ON MATRON many years later, but his early working life as a clerk at Brighton Town Hall, a member of the Palestine



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Police Force and an RAF pilot gave little indication of a glittering showbiz future and it was becoming a prisoner of war in Stalag Luft 3 camp during World War II, [immortalised in THE GREAT ESCAPE] that provided Tolly with an unorthodox entry into the entertainment industry. Out of boredom, and also to mask the digging noises from the escape tunnels Tom, Dick and Harry, Tolly wrote, MC'd and performed in the camp theatre in shows with fellow prisoners Rupert Davies, [later TV's MAIGRET] and Peter Butterworth, who was to become a lifelong friend as well as a Carry On stalwart. After the war Rothwell took up writing professionally finding success in the West End with the stage plays, *Three Spare Wives*, *Queen Elizabeth Slept Here*, *Once Upon A Crime* and *Meet The Wife* and wrote for the Crazy Gang and radio and TV shows for Terry Thomas, Arthur Askey and Ted Ray. In 1963 he offered Carry On producer Peter Rogers his script called *Follow That Cab*.



It was not intended as a Carry On but its storyline and characters were so similar to the Carry On style that it was released as CARRY ON CABBIE and marked an important turning point for the series taking the genre in a more lewd direction from their first screenwriter, Norman Hudis, where the risqué jokes were no more than a decoration but in Rothwell's scripts they became the very fabric of the films as he viewed the series as a continuation of Music Hall traditions epitomised by his hero Max Miller. He was quoted as saying, "I have what you might call self-imposed rules. Nobody ever actually swears and nobody actually succeeds in getting in to bed with anyone else."

Tolly was the master of the double entendre and delighted in creating fast paced gags and ridiculous characters with even more ridiculous names: The Khasi Of Kalabar, Citizen Bidet, Senna Pod, Emmanuelle Prevert and Jock Strapp to name but a few, which adds to the overall fun of the series. "By this time tomorrow," says Citizen Camembert, standing gleefully by the guillotine in Don't Lose Your Head, "the Duc Of Pomfrit will have had his chips!" In Cleo we have the slave sellers Markus and Spencius and Kenneth Williams shouting the immortal "Infamy! Infamy! They've all got it in for me!" and who else but Rothwell would think of calling

a street Avery Avenue for no other reason than giving Sergeant Bung the line in Screaming, "Then we must explore Avery Avenue". Hattie Jacques in CARRY ON MATRON tells Dr Cutting (Kenneth Williams), "I'm a simple woman with simple tastes, I want to be wooed". To which Williams replies, "You can be as wude as you like with me!"

It was Rothwell who was responsible for the introduction of another Carry On tradition, the secondary titles, like LET SLEEPING BAGS LIE [Carry On Camping], LIFE'S A FOUR LETTER WORD [Carry On Doctor], MIND MY CHOPPER [Carry On Henry] and FROM HERE TO MATERNITY [Carry On Matron].

Apart from being the series staff writer including Christmas TV specials Tolly also wrote the stage play, CARRY ON LONDON which ran at London's Victoria Palace from 1973-75 with his [and Sid James's] final film being CARRY ON DICK in 1974.

Tolly's deft pen was also responsible for the first series of UP POMPEII! starring Frankie Howerd as well as working on the DICK EMERY SHOW. He was given the THIS IS YOUR LIFE treatment on ITV in 1970 and after an OBE in 1977 for his services to the cinema industry he retired and left Fulking to live in Worthing where he died on 28th February 1981 after a long illness. He had two children. Does anyone have any stories about his time in Fulking? And what dates did he live here?

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