

# The Rutlanders Return



by Andy Barrett

## Introduction

The centenary of the First World War was commemorated in Rutland with an extensive range of events, exhibitions, talks and voluntary activities, coordinated by the Lord-Lieutenant's Committee for First World War Commemoration. Alongside work that examined the lives of those who served and those who fell, Arts for Rutland wanted to work with the community to share and celebrate the lives of those who returned; and to explore both the world that they returned to and how their experiences helped to shape the County in the years immediately following the end of the First World War.

It's a period in British history that is not often explored and yet it is a period of incredible tumult. This play follows the lives of four Rutland women and their families from the first moments of homecoming in 1918 through until the mid-1920s; and attempts to create a panoramic social vision of Rutland during that time. Through their relationships, families, work, dreams and struggles I hope that it sheds some light on a moment when old social hierarchies began to crumble and the promises of a new world were confronted with the realities of post war life.

The play came out of a long period of research through various archives and newspapers and I would like to thank all those in the museum service who helped with this, alongside the work of the research team. Many of the words that you will read in this play have come directly from those who were caught up in the aftermath of a war whose savagery nobody could foresee.

The following script has a number of small sections in it that were not performed at the time for casting reasons, but I have decided to include them here.

### Main characters

Susanna Cooke	A photographer's assistant and our narrator
Rose Cooke	Also a photographer's assistant and our narrator
Eliza	A farmer, whose son is returning from war
Tom	Eliza's husband, who farms the land with her
John	Tom and Eliza's son; a returning soldier
Mary	Working in the kitchens at North Luffenham House
Daniel	Mary's husband; a returning soldier
Patsy	A young woman who has to look after her father
Harry	Patsy's father, an ex-soldier with shell shock
Rosalind	A widow whose son has been killed in France
Peter	Rosalind's brother
Elsie Fenwick	Of North Luffenham House; served in the war as a nurse
Guy Fenwick	Elsie's husband, an ex-soldier and local councillor

Bertha	Head Cook at North Luffenham House
David Royce	A highly successful Land Agent
Countess Noel	Wife of the Earl of Gainsborough

### **Supplementary characters**

PO Official	Working for the Post Office
Lloyd George	The Prime Minister
Medical Officer	For Rutland
Speaker	Who launches the campaign for the new hospital
Sharpe	Chair of the Folk Dancing Association
Caller	Of the Rutland General Election results
Clark	Farming candidate for the General Election
Eccles	Labour candidate for the General Election
Dixon	Conservative candidate for the General Election
CD Official	Working for the Colonisation Department
Duke of Rutland	An aristocrat
Mrs Baird	Who gives a short speech at the Hospital opening
Betty	A young nurse
Cyril	Her father

Assorted nurses, hecklers, waiters, whist players, hustings attendees, opera singers, cooks, party goers, horses and other parts to be taken on by the whole cast.

## ACT ONE

### SCENE ONE - THE VILLAGE

**Susanna and Rose come onto an empty stage and begin:**

**Susanna:** Hello everyone; my name's Susanna ...

**Rose:** And my name's Rose ...

**Susanna:** And we've been asked to lead you through our story this evening.

**Rose:** We work as photographic assistants for one of those picture postcard companies that have helped to make Rutland so popular. Cooke's of Hambleton.

**Susanna:** Run by our father.

**Rose:** And we've been chosen to be your guides because we've photographed just about every nook and cranny of the fifty seven towns, villages and hamlets that make up this county of ours.

**Susanna:** From Ashwell and Ayston ...

**Rose:** To Whitwell and Wing.

**Susanna:** Of course every one of these places has its own customs and rituals, its own feuds and friendships and we can't show you Rutland in its entirety. But we can evoke what it's like to live here for the average Rutlander in the early years of the twentieth century. So, welcome to our typical Rutland village.

***The following section is highly animated as the cast enter to fill the stage and evoke the world that Susanna and Anne are describing. Every now and again the stage picture freezes as there is a flash as though a photograph is being taken.***

***All sing***

From the manor to the cottage, from the cottage to the farm

In the heart of England

There is much in one so little, like a ripple in the calm

In the heart of England



**Rose:**            Around three hundred people live here. There are three farms; two of which deliver milk.

**Susanna:**        There is a butcher; a pig killer, who will arrive at your house with a bag full of long knives and scare the children; a baker who delivers bread in a large basket; a wheelwright who doubles up as an undertaker; a blacksmith; a chimney sweep and two public houses.

**Rose:**            If you need anything else then that means a trip into Oakham on the Midland Red bus on a Wednesday or a Saturday; Furley and Hassan's perhaps for linen and drapery; or Jackson and Boston's for ironmongery.

**Susanna:**        The vicar lives in the village, carrying out three services a week and running the Sunday school. There's also a Methodist chapel. The Doctor is the only one with this new form of transport called the motor car. Everyone else travels by bicycle or horse and cart.

**All quietly sing 'Multum in Parvo, Multum in Parvo'**

**Rose:**            Life revolves around the seasons. We have spring lambing and a May Queen; there's the sowing and summer haymaking when the casual workers appear.

**Susanna:** Then the harvest with the reaping, the stoking, and the stacking of the corn; before the threshing machine arrives and the Harvest Festival takes place when bags of potatoes and vegetables are given out to those who need it.

**Rose:** Food is stored for the winter; there are the cattle sales and the preparation of the sheep for the next lot of lambing. And the cycle begins all over again as the ploughs come out once more.

**All:** No one saw that war was coming, that our lives could come to harm  
In the heart of England  
Wave them off with all our blessings, as we press on through the storm  
In the heart of England

**Susanna:** But for the last few years there have been new rituals that have woven their way through these ancient ones. The hunting has stopped, the dances too; as patriotic efforts take their place in the form of war savings campaigns and egg gatherings, and the sewing of socks and stockings to be sent to the front, along with the food parcels and letters that are written every night by worried wives and mothers; 'your father sends his love'.

**Rose:** And of course the Women's Legion have ensured that the land is as productive as it can be, taking on the work of those who have gone off to fight, and nearly half of the men from this village have done so.

***We see tables being laid or cigars being given out.***

**Rose:** And now new plans are being made. A good luncheon; roast beef and plum pudding with each guest to be given a cigar and cigarettes. There will be fireworks in the evening. For the war is over; and the soldiers and the nurses are returning. To a Rutland that will never be the same again.

**All:** So the men are sailing homeward, to the manors and the farms  
In the heart of England  
Light the lamps outside the homestead, make the beds up good and warm  
In the heart of England  
  
Rutlanders return

## **SCENE TWO - THE FOUR WOMEN**

***Four women appear. Mary is in domestic servant's attire holding a bowl and a whisk; Eliza is dressed in her best clothes and is wearing a new hat; Patsy is a postwoman; Rosalind is in mourning.***

***The four women break into four scenes across the stage.***

***Eliza moves across to a table where her husband Tom is eating breakfast; he has been out working on their small farm.***

**Tom:** Is that a new hat?

**Eliza:** We should look our best Tom. After all he's been through.

**Tom:** He won't worry what you look like; he'll just be glad to see you.

**Eliza:** I'm going to cry.

**Tom:** Of course you are. Which is why I've got this. ***(He takes a large white handkerchief out of his pocket).***

**Eliza:** Do you think he's been well treated? You hear terrible stories about the prisoners.

**Tom:** We don't know anything Eliza. Other than he's in one piece and he's coming back.

**Eliza:** Annabelle got assistance from the War Pensions committee.

**Tom:** What are you talking about?

**Eliza:** They provide help when the men come back. If they need it.

**Tom:** He'll have his work to do. We don't need another committee tipping their hats to Colonel Gretton to decide whether or not we're worthy of their charity.

**Eliza:** The committee are setting men up; they're helping families to cope.

**Tom:** And we'll need an extra pair of hands if we buy the land.

**Eliza:** He'll need to rest, get his strength up.

**Tom:** We don't know what he'll need.

**Eliza:** We are going to buy the farm aren't we Tom?

**Tom:** It's not for sale yet.

**Eliza:** But everyone in the village says that it will be. That the whole estate is to be put up.

**Tom:** They don't like the duties that Lloyd George has put on them. Owning land doesn't pay what it used to.

**Eliza:** But farming does Tom.

**Tom:** Let's hope you're right.

**Eliza:** It's the least that John deserves. To be able to inherit his own farm. To become a landowner. He was a Sergeant, Tom. A man of rank.

**Tom:** There's a long way between a Sergeant and a General.

**Eliza:** Go on; get yourself washed up. I want to be at the station good and early to make sure we're there.

***Tom exits.***

**Eliza:** And make sure you put on your best jacket.

**Tom:** You mean the one with the least holes in.

***And immediately we snap into:***

***Mary and Bertha are both whisking huge bowls of cream.***





**Bertha:** You'll be wanting to get off then; to see your husband.

**Mary:** His uncle is going to the station to fetch him home.

**Bertha:** You should have asked for the day off Mary.

**Mary:** There's too much to do.

*They keep whisking; Bertha being unsure how to respond to this. After a moment ...*

**Mary:** I haven't clapped eyes on him for over a year. What if he doesn't like me anymore?

**Bertha:** He'll like you very much. More than you're expecting probably.

**Mary:** What do you mean?

**Bertha:** I mean that there is going to be an awful lot of rumpy pumpy happening in Rutland over the next few weeks. The midwives will have their hands full come harvest time.

**Mary:** You're making the cream curdle.

**Bertha:** It's going to be a lot busier here now you know, with the master and mistress both coming back too. They'll want to start hunting as soon as they can. And the parties will begin again, that's for certain. People will want to dance this whole thing out of their hair.

**Mary:** Maybe they'll want a quieter life.

**Bertha:** You don't get to have a quiet life when you're the Fenwicks. There's always somebody that wants to be around them, to get an invitation, to join in the fun. Go on; get yourself home; we can all cope without you. And be careful. God knows what the men are bringing back from France with them!

***And immediately we snap into:***

***Patsy is handing over her mailbag and cap to a male Post Office official.***

**Official:** I'm going to need you to fetch me your bicycle too I'm afraid love.

**Patsy:** I must have cycled hundreds of miles over the last four years on that thing. And not a scratch on her.

**Official:** There's not many can say that.

**Patsy:** I'm going to miss it here.

**Official:** We're going to miss you too Patsy. And the other girls. It doesn't seem fair somehow.

**Patsy:** We were only standing in. It's right and proper that those who went off to fight get their jobs back.

**Official:** Your dad's very lucky to have you to look after him. We all hope it's not too hard. I'm sure we can find ways to help you both a little if needed.

**Patsy:** He's coming home; that's the main thing. And no-one will have to receive another of those awful letters.

***And immediately we snap into:***

*Rosalind is with her brother Peter, sitting at a kitchen table.*



**Peter:** How are you holding up?

**Rosalind:** They're not going to send any bodies back.

**Peter:** You can't really expect them to.

**Rosalind:** If you lose your son the very least you can expect is to be bury him.

**Peter:** He will have had a decent burial in France, amongst men who would have been like brothers to him.

**Rosalind:** I wish he'd died from his first injury. At least then I would know where his grave was. At least he was in a bed being looked after by a young nurse. I'm jealous of her you know, Betty, being able to care for him. He wrote about her so tenderly. Betty wiped my wounds; Betty held my hands; Betty is an angel. I suppose all the men must fall in love with their nurses.

**Peter:** Rosalind; they say that Thomas Cook are going to be organising tours for people to visit the graves over there.

**Rosalind:** I've no money for that.

**Peter:** I have some savings.

**Rosalind:** I couldn't. You've already done far too much for me and Billy (*she catches herself*) since Ted died. At least he didn't have to go through this.

**Peter:** What do I need money for? A pint of ale, a pork pie and a new inner tube every now and again and that's me about done.

**Rosalind:** No. I'm not sure I'll ever want to see France.

**Peter:** Well I won't touch it, the money, just in case ...

**Rosalind:** You're the kindest man Peter.

**Peter:** I'm just doing what any brother would do.

**Rosalind:** And you're all I have left.

**Peter:** (*Holding Rosalind's hand*) Now look, I know that nothing seems to make sense anymore but you've got to keep going.

**Rosalind:** Soldier on.

**Peter:** You've always kept yourself busy. You can't stop now.

**Rosalind:** I just don't know what to do.

**Peter:** There will be lots to do; money to raise, people to help. If there's one thing that this bloody war taught us it's that we can all rally together when we want to.

**Rosalind:** But I don't think people will want to anymore. I think they're exhausted; that what they desire more than anything else is to settle down with kith and kin and lead a nice, quiet life.

**Peter:** We'll see. *(He starts to cough)*

**Rosalind:** Are you alright?

**Peter:** Just a sniffle. Come on, can you give me a hand with the chickens?

***And now Susanna and Rose return:***

**Susanna:** Over a third of the men of Rutland went off to fight; three thousand, six hundred and ninety five. Five hundred and twenty five were killed and almost as many again were disabled from their injuries.

**Rose:** The majority, mercifully, came home seemingly unscathed ...

***We see the reunions of Eliza and Tom and their son John; Mary and her husband Daniel.***

**Rose:** But for others it was clear that the war was still with them; that they would carry it back inside their bodies and their minds into their houses and their families.

***A nurse brings Patsy's father, Harry, up to her in a wheelchair.***

**Nurse:** It's not going to be easy love.

**Susanna:** And people across the county took their places back on the farms; in the quarry; on the railways; at the post office, and the ironmongers, and the great houses of the landowners; and tried to pick up where they left off.

**Rose:** But there was something else to deal with first.

### **SCENE THREE - THE INFLUENZA AND THE GUN**

***A vicar comes up to Rosalind and consoles her. As he is doing so the following lines are shared out amongst the cast.***

**Susanna:** Influenza.

- You must inhale salt; that is the surest way of protecting yourself from the disease.
- Take advantage of the fresh air.
- Avoid crowded rooms or halls.

**Rosalind:** He had mahogany spots across his cheekbones and then this awful blue colour spread so quickly from the eyes, all across his face. Within two days.

- Infants under one are at most threat.
- More people are dying than being born.
- It's time for the vicars here to bury the men now.
- The men and the women and the children.

**Rosalind:** How can the slaughter of war be followed by this?

***This is a choreographed routine with the lines shared out amongst the cast and perhaps overlapping a little.***

- Empingham.
- Mr. Jim Pacey of Shacklewell Lodge, passed away at the early age of 30 years. Deceased went to work on the Wednesday morning previous, but had to return home.
- The greatest sympathy is felt for Mrs Pacey, who is left with five young children, two being only a fortnight old.
- Whilst her little boy aged seven, is lying dangerously ill with influenza, and is not expected to recover.

- There is urgent need for more hospital accommodation and further help is needed in this great emergency, especially the services of people who are willing to stay up with patients all night.
- Exton.
- The death of Mrs Wooton, a highly esteemed inhabitant, has occurred from influenza, followed by bronchitis. Aged 57, many will miss her little gifts and timely aids.
- In the event of any bereaved families experiencing difficulty in obtaining an undertaker, they are requested to communicate with the Medical Officer's department.
- Wakerley.
- There was a sorrowful assembly of villagers at the funeral last week, of Miss Grace Watchorn who, at the age of 24 years had been ill with influenza but a few days.
- Uppingham School wish to inform you that we are to close before the previously stated end of term on account of influenza
- Stoke Dry.
- Mr. John Percy Cox, who succumbed to influenza and bronchitis after six days illness, at the age of 26, was a well-known grazier and shepherd.
- The Food Controller wishes to impress upon the public the urgent need of economising in the consumption of milk. If the essential claims of children and invalids are to be satisfied it is imperative that other persons should either give up using milk altogether, or restrict their use to a minimum.
- Empingham.
- The sincerest sympathy is extended to Mr. H. Eason whose wife passed away on Monday, December 16<sup>th</sup> aged 59 years.
- Uppingham.
- Mary Jane the dearly beloved wife of ...

- Whissendine.



- Nellie, the beloved wife of ...

- Dr Rolleston, the Medical Officer of Health for Rutland stated that no less than 95 deaths in 1918 was due to the fatal epidemic of influenza. Nearly double the amount of deaths occurred amongst females.

***The cast now all disperse leaving Rosalind alone.***

**Rosalind:** A man came to see me yesterday. A Mr. George Phillips; to ask if I had a photograph of my son. He is writing a book to memorialise all those who have given their lives from the County. This is what we are thinking of now, now that the flu has passed. How do we memorialise the war dead? Every village has its meetings and discussion and ideas and designs. How should you memorialise? And why?

***The cast reappear pulling – with enormous strain – a large rope.***



**Rosalind:** There was a heavy artillery German gun put in Langham square. What a silly idea. It needed a traction engine to pull it and was still in working order when the children started playing on the thing. George Potter from Well Street lost the top of his finger when he trapped it in the breach. The locals roped it up, dragged it out of the square and thrust it into a ditch.

So what do we do to mark our remembrance? Do we advertise our regret and compassion in lavish objects of marble, brass, and glass? Is that what the fallen would have wanted? That four and a half years of war and destruction would be followed by a great outpouring of unproductive, and futile, labour? Why can't we make memorials serve a useful purpose? Like the Prime Minister said...

**Lloyd George:** What is our task? To make Britain a fit country for heroes to live in. There is no time to lose. I want us to take advantage of this new spirit. Don't let us waste this victory merely in ringing joybells.

## **SCENE FOUR - THE RUTLAND AGRICULTURAL SHOW**

***Eliza is at the kitchen table with her son John, who is reading the paper.***

**John:** They're resuming the Rutland Agricultural Show.

**Eliza:** So they should. We all just want to get back to normal as soon as possible.

**John:** There's all sorts of open classes. Dairy cows, shorthorns, large black pigs. Do you think we should enter?

**Eliza:** Not this year; we're not ready.

**John:** I remember getting dressed up when I was little to see your father get his prize.

**Eliza:** One hundred and seventy four lambs from eighty ewes and forty seven theaves; three dead, two barren.

**John:** The pastor used the word shepherd a lot. And some of the men said that's all we were. Sheep to the slaughter.

**Eliza:** ***(wanting to change the subject)*** We still had competitions you know. The Women's Legion. Butter making, milking, ploughing, straw pitching and loading. As good as any man. They managed to get motor-tractors too. And it was the women that drove them best.

**John:** When you're out there you think that everything at home is like it was. You want it to be.

**Eliza:** It's been a terrible time but the show is coming back and we can enter as landowners John, landowners not tenants! I'll even be able to cast a vote next time round, along with all the high and mighty ladies of Rutland. I might even become one myself.

***Tom enters.***

**Tom:** They're auctioning surplus army horses. I think we should go and have a look.

**John:** ***(indicating the newspaper)*** Have you seen how many farms are being sold? The livestock too.

**Tom:** Aye.

**John:** But we're alright aren't we?

**Tom:** I'm struggling to get my head around all the regulations to be honest; they seem to change every week.



**Eliza:** Being allowed to grow mustard seeds again, or strawberries and plums is just bringing things back to how they were before. *(Picking up the paper to indicate something)* And we can now use oatmeal as feed.

**Tom:** There's more things shifting than people realise. Some say there may be a commission to look at milk prices. And that could just be the start of it.

**John:** What do you mean?

**Eliza:** He doesn't mean anything.

**Tom:** We've stretched ourselves to buy this land, and we don't need prices beginning to wander.

**Eliza:** The government have said that they want to build the country up. They're making sure that those who work in the pits and on the trains and in the heavy industries get paid properly, and so they'll make sure the farmers do too.

**Tom:** I hope you're right love. My father said that theories come and theories go but farming always comes down to proper sowing, proper harvesting; keeping one eye on the weather and t'other on the land. *(Picking up the newspaper)* He never had all this to worry about.

**Eliza:** Come on Tom! Look at us. All together again; working the farm, our farm. If we have to tighten our belts a little it's nothing as to what we've had to face up to now.

**Tom:** I suppose not.

**Eliza:** And we may not be entering anything this year but we're still going to the show!

***And immediately, from elsewhere on the stage:***

**Voice:** Mr Guy Fenwick!

**All:** Hear hear!

***Guy Fenwick rises to open the Agricultural show.***



**Guy:** United effort and comradeship won the war and it is necessary for us all to remain united and to win the peace. It is said by some that the days in front of us are dark, that reaction after the war is setting in; but I see no signs of it. So long as we cling together, so long will we be prosperous. And this show, the Rutland show, is unlike any other I have seen in any other part of the world. These shows keep people united; competition amongst friends is healthy; and the class of animals that we produce cannot be beaten at any other show in England.

***Hear hear! Applause and music that leads into ...***

## **SCENE FIVE - LINCOLN AND THE BIRTH OF THE NINETEEN TWENTIES**

**All:** Ten! Nine! Eight! Seven! Six! Five! Four! Three! Two! One!

*The ringing of church bells. Music builds and the cast begin dancing. This is a party at the Fenwick's. Mary is handing out trays with glasses of champagne on; Bertha is present overseeing events. Susanna and Anne come through the crowd.*

**Susanna:** We've made it. The nineteen twenties!

**All:** Life's gone back, to how it used to be  
Everything we see, is satisfactory  
Let's all try, to make the most of it  
We've all been through the ... most abysmal time!

Things may change, but let us not forget:  
Life is never set, challenges are met.  
Let's all try, to make the time to play  
There's no need to have a reason or a rhyme

All our hunting, shooting, fishing  
What a life style we've been missing  
Now the parties they are partying again

The gels come out like fillies  
And the chaps can be quite silly  
When the parties they are partying again

Oh yes they are!  
Shout hurrah!  
The parties they are partying again.

Yes we're there in Debrett's peerage  
No we'll never sail in steerage  
Yes the parties they are partying again

This damned war has been so ghastly  
We all served our time steadfastly  
But the parties they are partying  
And partying and partying  
The parties they are partying again!

**Elsie:** Girl! More here! Quickly!

***As Mary comes over with the champagne we see Guy come over to Elsie.***

**Elsie:** Ladies and gentlemen, I have a surprise for one of our guests; Mr Alfred Codrington of Preston Hall.

***Cheers!***

**Elsie:** As I'm sure many of you know he has a wonderful story that my husband, as such a lover of horses, never tires to hear.

***Cheers!***

**Elsie:** And so may we present 'The Story of Lincoln'!

***A makeshift horse enters the room to cheers from the guests. It should look rather magnificent somehow, made from a mixture of hunting and wartime regalia. Throughout the scene it interacts with those at the party and responds to the story that is being told.***

**Elsie:** It is 1912; and our good friend Sir Alfred of Preston Hall buys a horse which he names

**All:** Lincoln!

**Elsie:** The finest mount of the Cottesmore Hunt.

***Cheers!***

**Guy:** Calm down.

***Sssshhh!***



**Elsie:** And ridden by Sir Alfred's two sons, Geoffrey and William.

- The lucky bounders!

**Elsie:** When war is declared, Geoffrey is sent to France with the Leicestershire Yeomanry and arranges to take Lincoln as his charge. And so, together ...

**Guy:** Don't forget the groom.

**Elsie:** With the groom; Lincoln and Geoffrey fight on the battlefields of northern France.

***Hurray!***

**Elsie:** Until Geoffrey is badly wounded and sent back to England.



- Three cheers for Geoffrey!

**Sssshhhh!**

**Elsie:** But Lincoln, brave Lincoln, remains on the front. Now ridden by none other than Geoffrey's brother.

**All:** William! William! William!

**Guy puts up his hand to call for silence.**

**Elsie:** Together, horse and rider remain right through to the bitter end, a feat that too few horses were able to endure. And so, finally, Lincoln leaves France ...

**Guy:** With his groom.

**Elsie:** To return home by rail to Manton station, in his own special horse carriage.

- Choo choo!

**Laughter.**

**Elsie:** Picture the scene as the train pulls in. Our hero Lincoln walks out on to the platform and then across to the road. He stands totally still for a minute or so. Then without any words, without the slightest touch, Lincoln begins to walk up the hill. Past Wing Grange and back into his old stable at Preston Hall.

**The horse neighs.**

- Did that really happen?

**Elsie:** Oh yes sir; it did. For here in Rutland horses know that they are loved as dearly as any other living thing. And they love us in return. And within a few weeks Lincoln was back out on the hunt, and will be again later today for the New Year's Meet!

- I'm not riding that!

- Three cheers for Lincoln, and three cheers for the hunt!

**Hip hip! As the cheers and music subside Elsie moves across to begin a conversation with Mr Royce.**



**Elsie:** Mr Royce; I'm so glad you could come. You must be earning a fortune from all these land sales.

**Royce:** It's doing wonders for hunting too Mrs Fenwick. I'm told that your sport has become all the rage in London. Everyone who's made a pile wants to try their hand at being a country gent. Many a good sized hall is being let as a 'hunting box' to the nouveau riche.

**Elsie:** Do you know Arthur Bird; Alfred's stud groom at the Hall?

**Royce:** No.

**Elsie:** Told everyone that after the horrors of the war the great days of hunting were over and left to become a market gardener at Bisbrooke.

**Royce:** He rather misjudged the market.

**Elsie:** He's not the only one. All these newcomers may ride terribly, and it may cost us a bit more in mending farmers' fences, but we're never averse to people who have money in their pockets joining in the fun. It's the hunt that keeps the County together. You lose the hunt and you lose the soul of Rutland.

**Royce:** People complain about the motor cars appearing on the roads; scaring horses, knocking people off of bicycles. And my great aunt insists that the hunt brings 'naughty' ways in its train.

**Elsie:** Naughty?

**Royce:** She recommends inoculation against an unspecified disease peculiar to the 'Shires'. Which I'm sure as an ex-nurse you will appreciate.

***Guy comes across.***

**Guy:** Ah Mr Royce ...

**Elsie:** ... is just berating us for bringing terrible danger to the county with all of these people coming to hunt.

**Guy:** It's what people want, after the war. To lose themselves in England.

**Royce:** Which is changing underneath their noses.

**Guy:** And it's always when change happens that people want to hold on to the past, or at least some idealised vision of it. And where better than here? A rural idyll made flesh. Hunting is understood here. It binds landlord, tenant, and labourer together. And anyone with any sense can see the money that it brings in; and goodness knows the County needs it. There are rumblings from those who know these things that the farmers' profits may not keep rising.

***Huge cheers. Susanna and Rose walk through the crowd that disperses.***

**Rose:** But 1920 is a fine year. The agricultural subsidies stay in place; and a shortage of oats drives up their price.

**Eliza:** Thomas! It's time to buy you a new jacket!

**Susanna:** But though the farmers are banking their money, the hunting parties are beginning to grow, the flu has vanished and the trophies for large black pigs are being polished again, the promised land fit for heroes is still to show its face.

## **SCENE SIX - MOULD**

***Patsy and Harry's house. Harry is in his wheelchair coughing as Patsy is wrapping a blanket over him.***

**Harry:** Thanks love. I just seem to feel the cold more than I used to.

**Patsy:** It's not you. The wind's whistling through these windows. And there's rain coming in.

**Harry:** The mould on the back wall's getting as thick as my fist.

**Patsy:** We won't be here for long Dad. I'll find a way to get us somewhere better to live. I promise.

***As Patsy finishes tucking in the blanket the Medical Officer for Rutland comes forward.***



**M/O:** As a result of my inspections during the course of the current year, I have recommended the building of over a hundred houses, the precise number for each parish to be determined by the Committee. There are over two hundred houses which are in a state of dampness and dilapidation as to be unfit for human habitation and yet most are at present occupied. My own recommendations regarding each parish have already been submitted and I trust that the selection of site and the definite determination of minimum requirements may be completed as promptly as possible.

## **SCENE SEVEN - MORE THAN PHEASANTS**

***Daniel and Mary's cottage; late at night. Daniel is reading a book as Mary returns from work.***

**Daniel:** You're late.

**Mary:** I'm sorry. They needed extra help with the packing.

**Daniel:** Leaving us are they?

**Mary:** They're going on one of their trips. The boat sets off early in the morning. ***(She reaches into her bag and puts a pheasant onto the table)***. Bertha told me to take it.

**Daniel:** We need to take more than pheasants from people like that.

**Mary:** Is that what your book tells you?

**Daniel:** George Bernard Shaw.

**Mary:** Who would have thought the war would teach you how to read?

**Daniel:** It taught me a lot of things Mary.

**Mary:** Did you go to see about the job?

**Daniel:** They only needed one engine man. They were very sorry. They understood how difficult it must be.

**Mary:** You could try at the quarry again. I've heard they need men there. And more and more people are coming to visit by train; they must need additional station guards.

***Daniel ignores her as he carries on reading.***

**Mary:** Why don't you put something in the paper like other men do?

**Daniel:** Rabbiting or ratting wanted, by disabled soldier. Experienced gardener; five children; wife seriously ill; no means. Ex-soldier, married to a Fenwick's lackey, will do whatever he's told for any scraps you can throw his way. Like a good Rutland boy.

**Mary:** Emma Palmer from Langham's husband was killed and she's bringing up seven sons whilst running a bicycle repair shop. Harry Pick of Greetham had his leg blown off and is training to be a cobbler. The vicar of Wing has put up a plaque of remembrance for his dead son next to the church pulpit and says he won't leave the village until he retires.

**Daniel:** Good for him.

**Mary:** Everyone is struggling to get things back to something like they used to be.

**Daniel:** But they mustn't go back to like they were Mary; that's the whole point. We have to change things. And when you read about what's going on in other places you can see something might be happening. Widening canals, building more railways, more houses. But what's happening here? Nothing! Since I've come back I've managed a day's work – just one day – at the Unionist fete in Burley; weeding the lawns. And the speeches I heard. About how the workers need to keep their noses to the wheel. How the socialists and the radicals are plotting to take over like the Bolsheviks. Do you know how many people they have working on the Council to help bring about this brave new world that we keep being promised?

**Mary:** As many as they need I presume.

**Daniel:** Seven! Seven to run the County. How many work at North Luffenham House?

**Mary;** I don't know.

**Daniel:** There are probably more than seven of you in the kitchen. More than seven of you running around after them all during their shooting parties. Laying down blankets; polishing butter knives; keeping the port at the perfect temperature.

**Mary:** Why do you keep going on about the Fenwicks?

**Daniel:** Because they represent everything that is wrong with this County. They say they care about it but as soon as the weather turns they're clambering on board the nearest steamer with all the others to get away from the wind and the rain.

**Mary:** Mr and Mrs Fenwick both fought in the war, just like you. And it's their money that's providing for us.

**Daniel:** In other towns and other counties there are people standing up, saying that the world needs to change.

**Mary:** Then why don't you get up and make a fuss rather than sitting here all day?

**Daniel:** I'm trying to find some work.

**Mary:** And in the meantime I have to do what I have to do. So stop being so bloody minded about it. One day you'll get a job and we will have a child and I won't need to go there anymore.

**Daniel:** Who would want to bring a child into a world like this?

**Mary:** Will you pluck that for me please? I need to get some sleep. I'm in early tomorrow. Maybe I should ask to stay in quarters like most of the others.

***Daniel has studiously ignored her by going back to his book; Mary exits.***

## **SCENE EIGHT - PATSY'S PROGRESS**

***Patsy and Harry's. Harry is still in his wheelchair as they are both sat next to a radio set. An early radio broadcast is playing.***

**Susanna:** How do you get back to normal after the cataclysm of a war that has mechanized slaughter? Perhaps by returning to a pre-war world, or perhaps by embracing modernity, in whatever form it comes.

**Rose:** Or perhaps by a little bit of both.

**Harry:** She's a beauty Patsy. Where did you get the thermionic valves from?

**Patsy:** Percy let me have them. On the quiet.

**Harry:** The best telegraph mechanic in Rutland.

**Patsy:** How come he wasn't sent off to fight?

**Harry:** Born eight weeks before me. Premature too apparently. His mother must have seen a fortune teller and squeezed him out quick.

**Patsy:** You seem well today.

**Harry:** Still in this thing though. I should be out of it by now. They said it's my mind that's stopping me from walking. All this ... noise and turmoil. It's like that thing (*indicating the radio*) just moving round and round and round the dial.

**Patsy:** I hear you in your sleep. I try and make out what you're saying but I can't really.

**Harry:** I'm ruining your life.

**Patsy:** Don't say that.

**Harry:** I think I'm going to get better; everything quietens down and it's like I'm looking out over a calm sea; and then it just hits me again. I'm useless. I should be looking after you.

**Patsy:** I'm not a child anymore. And the pension we get from the government helps.



**Harry:** You work so hard, and this place is a hovel, and you never seem to have any fun.

**Patsy:** This is fun.

**Harry:** You need a young man.

**Patsy:** I can manage alright. You should have seen me on my rounds.

**Harry:** I know; but still.

**Patsy:** There was one dad, while you were away. Just a friend but we were ... close.

**Harry:** You've never mentioned anyone.

**Patsy:** He was a German. Bernard. He was sent back.

**Harry:** Right.

**Patsy:** You'd have liked him.

**Harry:** I'm not so sure about that.

**Patsy:** There was a lot of them; working on the land. The War Office sent them. Skilled ploughmen some of them. Men who knew the land; who were so happy to be here.

**Harry:** I bet they were.

**Patsy:** Small groups of them, always with a soldier and a foreman.

**Harry:** How did you get to talk to him?

**Patsy:** Don't ask me too many questions Dad; please. Everything was different then.

**Harry:** It's different now.

**Patsy:** What did you expect?

**Harry:** I wanted it to be the same; exactly the same. I wanted to get back and start again but I can't.

**Patsy:** It just takes time, that's what the nurse said. That's all, time. And right now, at this precise time, there's a concert from Holland about to start. Do you want to listen to it with me?

**Harry:** Course I do.



***Patsy tunes in the radio and we hear a concert playing as:***

**Rose:** How long will it take? For those who still suffer from injuries of the body and the mind? And what costs will the waiting bear?

**Susanna:** Thomas Slater walked from Greetham to Oakham through thick snow to see a Doctor for a minor operation on his wounded leg. After the Doctor had finished he was told to go home and dutifully limped back to Greetham where he died a few days later; the effort obviously finishing him off.

***A speaker appears.***

**Speaker:** We have called this meeting because we think that if we can find enough people to help we can create a most fitting memorial to those who gave their lives for their country.

***Rosalind now appears, listening to the speaker.***

**Speaker:** One that is beneficial to every soul who resides in our county. One that embraces the desire for a different world; a caring world. Ladies and gentlemen let us find a way together to build the best hospital for Rutland that any of us can imagine.

***Rosalind claps enthusiastically as Susanna and Rose continue:***

**Rose:** And Patsy, worried that her father will never get better unless he can see that she is happy, from that day on made sure that between her work and her father's care she would squeeze every last drop from every last day. So that he wouldn't worry; so that he could see that everything was alright.

**Susanna:** So that he would get better.

**Patsy:** I'm going to the cinema Dad; to see Tarzan; it's a marvellous adventure of the African jungle.

**Susanna:** Throwing herself into every craze that appeared.

***Folk dancing music and the cast all begin to dance.***

**Sharpe:** In these days it is essential that country life be brightened, and its cultural interests and recreations must be restored. Its social amenities must extend beyond the bar of the village 'pub' which, at its best, does not supply all that the younger members of the community, including the women, require. Folk dancing is For herone of the ways and, perhaps, the best way.

**Rose:** Cecil Sharpe the founder of the English Folk Dance Association; and an old Uppinghamian no less.

**Sharpe:** Get ready for the Ruffy Tufty!

***The music changes into a jazz tune.***

**Susanna:** And then jazz arrived too. But it never really took root in the village halls of Rutland.

***The music stops.***

**Susanna:** Patsy became known as an indispensable member of any Treasure Hunt team.

***A group of people gather round Patsy.***

**Patsy:** 'Where the builders sit near the badgers sett and the bantams cluck where the boxers met'. I've got it! Follow me.

***Egyptian music.***

**Rose:** And when a magic lantern lecture was given in the school room on the subject of The Treasure of the Tomb of Tutankhamen in 1922 she, like so many others, became overnight students of Egyptology as fancy dress competitions across the county were won by farmhand Pharoahs and chambermaid Cleopatras.

***A pair of wonderful examples are revealed to much applause.***

**Susanna:** But by then another discovery had been made. By Eliza and Tom and John, and all the other farmers of Rutland.

***John runs on to meet Eliza and Tom who are standing in wellington boots and overcoats.***

**John:** Dad, mum! The government have said they're not going to protect prices any more.

**Eliza:** Where did you hear this?

**John:** One of the beaters overheard it on a shoot. It's going to be announced tomorrow.

**Tom:** And with Canadian wheat waiting to flood into the market the price is bound to collapse. Well then Eliza, this is it. Just as one war begins to fade from view another one begins.

***As the lights dim, and the theme plays again, we hear the sound of a steamer whistle and laughter from the Fenwicks.***

## ACT TWO

### SCENE ONE - THE ELECTION

*The sound of a steam train as the stage is filled with smoke through which Susanna and Rose appear. As they do so there is a reprise of the musical theme – potentially with a lyrical refrain.*

**Rose:** We've ridden right through 1922, on the train of course; like so many others. And the view from the windows has been most stimulating.

**Susanna:** The Rutland Police Court sessions at Oakham Castle, under the chairmanship of Mr Guy Fenwick, have been busy dealing with pear stealing at Ketton; the night time riding of bicycles without lights; the unnecessary suffering of goats ...

**Rose:** ... and those most heinous of villains - motor cyclists with no hooters.

**Susanna:** Look more closely still and you will have caught fleeting glimpses of Methodist feasts; livestock auctions; garden fetes; and the onward march of the Women's Institute who have left few villages untouched with their highly successful sorties and manoeuvres.

*An election hustings springs up, with the three candidates and their banner carrying supporters.*

**Rose:** And, of course, there has been a General Election. With meetings for candidates of the Rutland and Stamford Division being held across the County.

*Questions are put to the candidates.*

**A:** The amount of men seeking relief from the Board of Guardians is growing. The workhouse is full of vagrants! Why don't you start building houses and employing people?

**B:** You say that village schools are being closed because of a falling population. But once you start making children go to the towns, then country living begins to change and more and more people will leave the land. We need proper teachers in proper schools!

**C:** When the Germans were sinking our ships we vowed that we were cured of our folly for neglecting agriculture. And now look! We need a national agricultural policy so that this country stops being so dependent on foreign supplies.

**Rose:** 15,492 men voted

**Eliza:** *(holding up her ballot paper)* And 11,582 women.

**Caller:** The votes cast for the candidates are as follows. Mr. Edward Clark, Agriculture and Independent.

**Clark:** No stronger patriots exist in the country today than the agricultural community, and yet the situation as it stands for the farmer is intolerable.

**Caller:** 4,471. Mr Fleming Eccles, Labour.

**Eccles:** Those who have done best out of the war should be made to give something in return to those who have fought to protect the wealth of the country.

**Caller:** 7,236. Mr Chas Harvey Dixon, Conservative and Unionist.

**Dixon:** I will support the Prime Minister in his laudable efforts to reduce taxation as soon as possible. But to do so we must first cut down expenditure.

**Caller:** 10, 278. I hereby declare that Mr Chas Harvey Dixon has been elected to represent this constituency.

***The election team now all exit, as we hear the sound of a train hooter.***

**Susanna:** Ah! We've arrived! 1923.

**Both:** Welcome to Rutland!

## SCENE TWO - THE COLLAPSE

*Tom and Eliza have a ledger in front of them. Eliza has opened a money box and there are a few coins scattered on the table. It is very early in the morning.*



**Eliza:** I'm sorry Tom.

**Tom:** What for?

**Eliza:** It was me that pushed you into this.

**Tom:** Don't be daft. It made perfect sense. We're all in the same boat. I just didn't realise how ... connected things are. When the war came we forgot that there's other land and other farmers in other countries. And now they're letting it all flood in there's nothing we can do. It's funny really; you work the land all your life and then when you finally become your own man they do everything they can to take it away from you.

**Eliza:** We'll see it through. We just need to borrow a little more.

**Tom:** The bank manager isn't stupid.

**Eliza:** He didn't mind lending us money when the subsidies were coming in and the prices were high.

**Tom:** Another couple of farms are up for sale. Bankruptcies. That never used to happen unless there was drink or gambling involved.

**Eliza:** We're not done yet.

***John enters in his pyjamas.***

**John:** What are you doing up so early?

**Tom:** We couldn't sleep.

**Eliza:** I'm not feeling too well; I was keeping your father up.

***Tom looks at Eliza suspiciously.***

**Tom:** That's not the reason.

**Eliza:** You go back up love; we've got a busy day ahead of us.

**Tom:** Sit down.

**Eliza:** Off you go.

**Tom:** He needs to know.

**John:** Know what?

**Eliza:** It's just some figures.

**Tom:** We're losing money faster than you can imagine.

**Eliza:** We need to make some small adjustments.

***Tom looks at Eliza sternly.***



**John:** I can see that things are difficult.

**Tom:** That's not the half of it.

**Eliza:** The government won't let us all fall by the wayside.

**Tom:** There's many that have.

**John:** But we have to grow food. We have to feed ourselves, don't we?

**Tom:** That is what you'd presume.

**Eliza:** It's just things sorting themselves out; that's all.

**Tom:** First they told us to turn to grass, then to dig it all up; but when they guaranteed the price of wheat and there was no fear of overproduction we became greedy.

**Eliza:** That's not right Tom.

**Tom:** We forgot how precarious farming has always been. That failure is always hanging over you. We forgot that Eliza; we did; all of us. Every month the Food Controller asking for more milk, more potatoes, more corn. And now the war's over and the price guarantees have been abolished we're having to face the music. Milk has fallen; wheat pretty much halved in one year; oats the same, barley too. And livestock's a total loss. Now they've reassessed the land rates and guess what? They don't have a clue in London what's going on in places like this.

**John:** Before I was taken prisoner I saw a lot of French farms, and they were all owned by ordinary families, like us. And some of the farmhouses; it broke your heart to see them being blasted to bits. They can't take this off you.

**Eliza:** I'm going to see the bank manager tomorrow and ask him for just a little bit more to get us through. Just this winter, that's all we need. Maybe we need to go into pigs.

**Tom:** I don't know pigs.

**Eliza:** Increase the egg production then.

**Tom:** Chickens, pigs, which is it Eliza?

**Eliza:**           Something different. There's some that have moved into mechanised grain growing.

**Tom:**            We didn't buy the land to do something different. We bought the land to do what we know.

**Eliza:**           How about turkeys?

**John:**           Maybe I can get another job on the side to bring in a bit more money.

**Eliza:**           We're not working you into the grave after all you've been through.

**Tom:**            There's a few other farmers in the same boat. Perhaps we could club together; sell the machinery we don't need and share what we have. Use our land sensibly to work through this. Things are going to have to change. They can't keep letting all this meat and milk in tins come over from America.

**Eliza:**           See; there's always an answer when you put your mind to it. We just need to work together a little harder. Like always.

**Tom:**            And pray we get some better weather.

**Eliza:**           We need the land to dry out; that's for sure.

***A crack of thunder and the sound of heavy rain.***

### SCENE THREE - A CONFRONTATION

*The sound of rain continues. Guy Fenwick comes out of a council meeting carrying a briefcase and an umbrella. Patsy approaches him. She is wet through.*



**Patsy:** Councillor!

**Guy:** Madam.

**Patsy:** May I ask about the houses that you've said you're to build? When they will be ready? How can people go about getting one?

**Guy:** I'm afraid that for the moment we are ... pausing in our efforts to make new housing stock available.

**Patsy:** But why? We were promised houses but there's hardly any being built. Four in Manton; four in Whissendine; four in Langham; a few more in Oakham.

**Guy:** It is a question of finances. There has been an unexpected cost to the council of the maintenance and improvement of the roads. And then there are the changes to education and the scholarships that we are awarding. The rates are constantly on the increase and there is only so much that ...

**Patsy:** The house that my father and I are living in is not properly fit sir.

**Guy:** And we are aware of the problem; believe me. It is just very, very difficult.

**Patsy:** But if we can send an army abroad why can't we build houses for the men who fought for us?

**Guy:** What does your father do?

**Patsy:** He is ill sir, in the mind; from the war.

**Guy:** I see. And your mother?

**Patsy:** Long dead sir. I look after him and find work where I can. I used to be a postman during the war. Now all I'm suited for is serving ale in the White Horse on Thursday evenings; doing the washing for old Mrs Parker on a Wednesday; and fruit bottling for the farms when they're ready.

**Guy:** Can you write your name and address down for me please? Here. You can write?

**Patsy:** I don't think I would have made a very good postman if I couldn't.

**Guy:** Of course; I'm sorry.

**Patsy:** *(as she is writing)* Did you know they still called us that? Postmen.

**Guy:** Look, I can't promise anything but I'll see if I can help you in some way.

**Patsy:** Thank you sir.

**Guy:** And well done for looking after your father. I don't think this county could survive without the love and care of people like you.

***The sound of the rain fades out.***

## **SCENE FOUR - A BLOOMING**

***Mary is peeling potatoes in the kitchen at North Luffenham house. Elsie enters.***

**Elsie:** Mary.

**Mary:** Yes m'am.

**Elsie:** Have you heard about Bertha?

**Mary:** No m'am.

**Elsie:** It's rather sad. Her sister's husband has died, from his war wounds. There are three young children left behind; and Bertha has asked for some time off, to help her sister.

**Mary:** That's awful m'am.

**Elsie:** It is. That stupid war. We had friends in Germany you know, quite a few actually. It all seemed rather ludicrous that overnight we became enemies and were expected to kill each other. I often wonder how many generations it will end up affecting. Here, and there.

**Mary:** My husband hasn't been the same since he came back m'am. He's angry all the time. Full of rage at the world.

**Elsie:** I'm sorry to hear that.

**Mary:** What was it like m'am? Being a nurse over there?

**Elsie:** It was terrible. I've always been a hardy woman, it was the way I was brought up; but nothing prepares you for having to cut a man's leg off.

**Mary:** I can't imagine.

**Elsie:** ***(wanting to get back to business)*** Anyway hopefully Bertha will eventually feel able to rejoin us and in the meantime I have put an advertisement for someone to cover her duties in the newspaper.

**Mary:** Yes m'am.

**Elsie:** But we have a special guest this weekend. Our great friend Dame Nellie Melba. And I wonder if you would be able to take on Bertha's duties for the moment. Nellie has very particular tastes and we want to make sure that everyone has the most wonderful time.

**Mary:** I'll do my best m'am.

**Elsie:** I'm sure you will. Thank you. And your husband; is he working?

**Mary:** No m'am.

**Elsie:** Only I need someone to look after my ferrets.

**Mary:** I'll ask him m'am.

**Elsie:** And have you told him? Surely that might calm his temper a little.

**Mary:** Told him what m'am?

**Elsie:** You have a very healthy glow Mary. You're positively blooming.

***Elsie exits. Mary appears momentarily in a panic, being both previously unaware that she may be pregnant and also having to cope with the added responsibility that has just been put on her.***

***Susanna and Rose now appear and over the following speech we see a number of female cooks appear as work in the kitchen begins.***

**Rose:** Ah those parties; and ah those guests. The Maharajah of Jaipur whose servant is made to sleep across the door each night.

**Susanna:** The American film star Les Everett, who surrounds himself with pretty girls all in high heels and silk stockings, even at the grouse shoots.

**Rose:** And the Prince of Wales, who always ends up at the Red House in Whissendine to have bacon and eggs with the Alexander's.

**Susanna:** But this weekend Rutland is playing host to the greatest prima donna the world has ever known. And Mary is in charge of the dinner.

***Dame Nellie appears 'singing' the recording of 'Se Saran Rose' (or sung live) whilst the women continue to work in a choreographed routine to the music.***



## **SCENE FIVE - NEW JOBS**

*Royce is knocking on the door of Patsy and Harry's cottage. There is no answer. He turns to leave as Patsy appears carrying a radio accumulator.*

**Royce:** Are you Patsy, by any chance?

**Patsy:** Yes sir.

**Royce:** Mr Fenwick asked me to call by to see you.

**Patsy:** Do you want to come in? (*indicating the accumulator*) The van from Uppingham comes alternate Saturdays, so I always change the accumulator for the wireless.

**Royce:** I see.

**Patsy:** Are you here to look at the condition of the cottage?

**Royce:** Sorry?

**Patsy:** Are the houses going to be built? Can we get on the list?

**Royce:** No ... I'm nothing to do with the housing committee, I'm afraid. Mr Fenwick said that you were looking after your father; and doing odd jobs. I might have a position for you.

**Patsy:** And what do you do sir, if you don't mind me asking?

**Royce:** Land sales, auctions. It's a busy time.

**Patsy:** Well he may have told you that I worked at the Post Office during the war; and I was as good there as any man. And although I don't have any secretarial experience I can write very clearly. And I'm good with figures; and always punctual; and can pick up anything that's thrown at me. I'm sure the Post Office would give me a very good reference.

**Royce:** That wouldn't be necessary.

**Patsy:** But surely you'd need one, even though Councillor Fenwick ...



**Royce:** My wife and I seem to be rarely home these days, with all the endless functions and eating out. So there wouldn't be too much cooking. But the cleaning. Our previous woman has had to leave. Her husband invested his war pension in some scheme or another and I'm afraid, like so many others, it didn't turn out too well.

**Patsy:** I see. Yes, of course.

**Royce:** So you're happy to take on the post?

**Patsy:** Yes sir; of course sir.

**Royce:** Right then; the job is yours. And ... well, let's just say that I'm willing to be a considerate employer. We all like to do our bit. Come round in the morning. *(Handing her a card)* Here's my address. Lovely to meet you.

**Royce exits leaving Patsy looking rather despondently at the card.**

**Susanna:** And so for Patsy and her father not a new house but a better wage, working for a man who found himself at the very centre of the changing face of Rutland.

**As she says this a waiter appears, taking Royce's coat as a table and chairs are brought on. Music begins as Lady Noel, the Countess of Gainsborough enters and sits, gesturing to Royce to also do so.**

**Rose:** And often in the presence of the great and the good. Like the Countess of Gainsborough.

**Royce:** Lady Noel.

**Noel:** I've been told that you've put whole villages under your hammer. Langham, Brooke, Ridlington.

**Royce:** With a heavy heart.

**Noel:** And a good percentage. But that you are the right person to conduct the sale of part of our estate.



**Royce:** May I ask how long your family has owned land here?

**Noel:** Three hundred years. However my husband is very ill and with these ludicrous death duties I wonder if we'll even be able to keep a tomb over our heads.

**Royce:** Then our conversation is, of course, confidential.

**Noel:** Oh you can say what you like. Nobody pays any attention to us anymore.

**Royce:** I'm not so sure about that.

**Noel:** Have you seen this new fellow who has been appointed High Sheriff?

**Royce:** Mr Gee; yes.

**Noel:** A cobbler I believe.

**Royce:** A very successful footwear manufacturer.

**Noel:** Exactly. Worms his way in by purchasing the manor of Teigh and now lords it over everyone.

**Royce:** I understand that it must be ... challenging; the way that ...

**Noel:** But they've made us realise you see; they've opened our eyes. The land owned us as much as we owned it. So we have to abandon our sentimental attachment and become a business. Like you Mr Royce.

**Royce:** Nonetheless your family connection does stretch back generations.

**Noel:** Oh we won't get rid of it all. And my grandchildren will still be invited to open fetes. We're simply 'restructuring our portfolios'.

***She beckons the waiter over, who pours champagne into two glasses.***

**Noel:** I'll let you into a secret Mr Royce. We can cope with some extra taxes with a bit of careful management. It's the demise of our political position that hurts. Because that is what's really crumbling away. Everything used to be decided over dinner, around the fire, in the saddle. Of course the country needs rebuilding, I can see that. But once government expands into health and housing and trade and industry everyone has to be very professional about it all; and you end up with managers and businessmen and professional politicians. And the more democracy there is the more the poor will want to plunder the rich. Who can blame them? And why are we so quiet about what is happening? Why are we going out with a whimper? Because we're in mourning. The landed gentry have had their sons mown down and really what do we have left?

**Royce:** You seem to have a very clear view of things.

**Noel:** If you are as privileged as I am then you must realise that the price you pay for your material good fortune is that you cannot have the influence that you once did. Rather good champagne isn't it? So; let's get down to business.

***They both take a sip from their glasses as Rose and Susanna come through with the camera.***

## SCENE SIX - A PHOTOGRAPH

*Susanna and Rose are setting up to take a photograph of Rosalind, who is organising a group of people who now flood the stage to set up a Whist Drive fundraising event.*

**Rose:** The Whist Drive Queen they began to call Rosalind, as for eighteen months every village played host to that particular game of cards ...

**Susanna:** ... and discarding, trumping and the winning of tricks became the most common form of recreation in Rutland.

**All:** Money must be raised, we must find a way  
There are many games and pastimes we can play  
Let's all put our heads together;  
What things can resist  
All the vagaries of Rutland weather?  
Make a little list

A garden fete with skittles and croquet  
Might pay  
Or could some fortune telling and a race  
Take place?  
Or dancing exhibitions with a syncopated orchestra  
But none of them can really cut the mustard



And then there's whist  
We're raising money and it's such a hoot  
You get the gist  
You'll win the day if you can follow suit

A charming recitation on a stage  
Is all the rage  
And everyone is bowling for a pig  
It's big!  
While bran tubs and tombolas or a wireless entertainment  
Are a good idea but what the people want now

Is whist  
One cannot beat the thrill of winning tricks  
It's in the wrist  
The ladies and the gentlemen can mix

Obstacle races (whist!)  
Wheelbarrow races (Whist!)  
Charity dances (WHIST)  
Charity concerts (WHIST!)  
Tea and refreshments (WHIST!!)  
Prize bands and lawn bowls (WHIST!!!!)

They're all very well  
But let's play whist!  
The game of cards that trumps all of the rest  
Wondrous whist!  
We all agree that whist is just the best  
Whist  
You're never wistful playing whist!

**Rosalind:** Ladies and gentlemen, welcome. As we all know for the first years after the war every month saw tablets of brass, of white marble, of new church windows being unveiled in memory of the fallen. But alongside these acts of commemoration other forms of remembrance were taking shape. And now there are grand openings across Rutland - Braunston, Preston, Great Casterton and the rest

– of village halls to be used by each and every parishioner. This whist drive is raising money for another form of memorial; a hospital. And having been given the honour of seeing the plans for the new building, with its x-ray machines and operating theatres, I can tell you that our county will soon be truly entering into the modern age. So good luck with the game! And remember that tonight some fortunate person will win a ton of coal.

**Susanna:** The shutter speed is set as slow as we can make it; not just milliseconds but days and weeks and months as 1924 passes by.

***Rosalind, Patsy, Eliza and Mary, with her baby, now come forward for the photograph; each in response to the description of them.***

**Susanna:** Rosalind traversing the county with her charitable soul and dreaming of the day that the hospital opens.

**Rose:** Patsy working herself into the grave between Mr Royce, her father and a damp, damp house.

**Susanna:** Eliza praying for an upturn in fortunes as the prices continue to tumble and farms continue to fail.

**Rose:** And Mary seeing another world from the side of the room, always ready to serve; until there is someone else demanding her time and attention.

**All:** Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one. Happy New Year!

**Rose:** 1925; the final year of our story; when everything must come to a head.

## **SCENE SEVEN - SUGAR BEET**

***Eliza and Tom are sitting at their kitchen table.***

**Tom:** And you're certain about this? Sugar beet?

**Eliza:** Yes. The government is looking for farms to supply the new industry. We're not as ideally placed as some, being further from the factories, but that's why we should try it Tom. Because others here won't. Not yet. The soil is right for it. We only need twelve tons of dung per acre and the rest of the fertilisation can be done with phosphates, nitrate of soda and potash.

***John enters in a suit.***

**Eliza:** What are you doing all dressed up?

**John:** It's nothing special.

**Eliza:** You after a girl?

**John:** No mother.

**Tom:** When does he have time to go chasing after girls?

**Eliza:** They should be chasing after him. When are you going to start courting? I want a grandchild.

**John:** I would have thought you had enough on your plate.

**Eliza:** Well wherever you're off to I'm glad of it. You need a break after all this hard work. We all need a break. Perhaps your dad here will take me out dancing. He was very fine on his feet back in the day. And there's something going on at the village hall soon, in aid of this new hospital. Perhaps you should get some practice in Thomas.

**Tom:** Perhaps I will.

***Tom grabs Eliza and dances a few steps with her.***

**John:** You two seem in high spirits.

**Eliza:** I think we may have got through the worst of it John.



**Tom:** You do realise your mother always has an answer for everything.

**John:** I'll be going then.

**Tom:** Have fun, boy!

***John exits as dance music begins and Eliza and Tom continue to dance. As they do so John sits on a chair, attending a public meeting.***

**Eliza:** It's all going to be alright! I can feel it in my water!



**Tom:** He'll find a young girl soon enough.

**Eliza:** That he will. And I'll get my hat out and wear it to their wedding, and then put it on again when our first grandchild arrives.

**Tom:** And you'll spoil it rotten.

**Eliza:** Of course I will. And fill it full of sugar!

***A man from the Colonisation Department enters to address the meeting.***

**CD official:** Canada is as empty as a drum and is just waiting for land to be farmed and ranches to be built. This scheme that I am here to explain to you tonight – three thousand families to be placed on farms in this new homeland - may be just the thing that some of you have been looking for. And it's not just families that are needed. But men who know how to milk and to plough and can handle horses.

***Eliza and Tom have danced off the stage as John gets up and we move into:***

## **SCENE EIGHT - THE PUB**

***Daniel is sitting in a pub with a group of male colleagues. As he is speaking Patsy enters and the crowd begin to switch their attention to her.***

**Daniel:** Did you hear the language of the Armistice Day sermon? Have you read the letters in the papers? I tell you, they're either stirring up antagonism against Germany and the workers there, or attacking those who dare to strike here as Bolsheviks determined to destroy this country. And it's solely to draw attention away from their own policies. Policies which will do nothing to change things for the better but will allow them to keep lining their pockets without any care of the consequences ...

***(Noticing that he has lost their attention he addresses Patsy)*** Can I help you love?

**Patsy:** Someone said there was a meeting here.

**Daniel:** That's right. For ex-soldiers. Wanting to make sure the Labour party wins the next election and does what the people of this country were promised.

**Patsy:** I can listen to what you have to say can't I?

**Daniel:** We need people who will do more than listen. We need those who are willing to face the power of capital head on, with our fists if necessary. It's not the work of women.

**Patsy:** Because women haven't faced down violence in their campaign for the vote have they? They've not had to cope with hand bells being rung and cans of dried peas being rattled while they tried to speak. Not had to duck as chestnuts and worse were thrown at them.

**Daniel:** And that argument has been won. You women are all going to have the vote, like us men.

**Patsy:** So you're going to have to start persuading us of your way of thinking then aren't you?

**Daniel:** And I don't hold up much hope for that. The women of Rutland are either indoctrinated by their service in the homes of those with money and power, or think that organising charity functions will change the world.

**Patsy:** Is that so?

**Daniel:** What are you prepared to do then love?

**Patsy:** As much as you I reckon. More probably.

***The men laugh and clap at this put down.***

**Patsy:** Talk's easy isn't it? And I've just realised that the last thing that I need is another man who thinks he's better than me telling me how to think or what to do.

***Patsy exits as we see Rosalind standing up from another bar stool.***

**Rosalind:** Miss Duncan of Ashwell has contributed forty three pounds of linen, vegetables, eggs and lemons. Mrs Bird of Bisbrooke; fifty two pounds of apples, raspberry vinegar, and soap. Mrs Hutton of Barrowden; one stone of flour, an air bed, and bath towels. Mrs Seton of Burley; two hot water bottles.

**Rose:** We could be here all night with this; so ...

## SCENE NINE - THE AUCTION

*The whole cast now flood the stage for the auction of the Gainsborough estate.*



**Royce:** Welcome everyone, what a crowd. And may I say that as well as this being my duty, it is also a privilege to offer the remaining parts of the outlying portion of the Gainsborough Estate which has not been sold to the tenants. Before we begin perhaps we can agree to regret the severance of the very long associations which have existed from generation to generation here in Rutland and which this auction represents.

***Hear hear!***

**Royce:** So let us begin. Lot 14; the sheepwash.

**Heckler:** Which no-one's allowed to wash their sheep in!

**Royce:** It could be fished.

***A hand is raised.***

**Royce:** Sold for five pounds! Lot 21; Prior's Coppice, one of the best-known fox coverts in Cottesmore country.

**Heckler:** They should buy it then!

**Royce:** Anyone? No buyer! Lot 25; 'Priory Farm' at Brooke, so named because of the substantial remains in the grounds of the Priory founded in the time of Richard the Lionheart.

**Heckler:** The roof's falling in! Will the buyer have to mend that?

**Royce:** Upkeep of our heritage is vital gentlemen and you're the new custodians now.

**Heckler:** They've had years to deal with it.

**Royce:** Having failed to reach its reserve price, the lot is withdrawn. Lot 39; the Noel's Arms Inn, Langham.

***A hand is raised.***

**Royce:** Sold to Mr Kenneth Ruddle, who I believe is the principal of the Langham Brewery Company and will do a fine job.

***Cheers!***

**Royce:** Lot 46; the village playground, Langham. And I have great pleasure in informing you that Mr. Owen Smith, of the Langham Playground Committee, has privately purchased the land and will be giving it over to the village.

**Heckler:** We're going to have a see saw!

**Hooray!**

**Royce:** Thank you everyone. The old order changeth and giveth place to the new.

***As the crowd disperses the Duke of Rutland appears.***

**Rose:** The Duke of Rutland.

**Duke:** What we are seeing is a peaceful revolution which has bitten deeper into the English countryside than ever did the Wars of the Roses. Though England is conservative, she is equally adaptable, but I believe that for many of those who have sold their estates land was in their blood, that they were born to their task, and that many of our new landlords will find an estate much harder to run than a factory. So what will happen to our old landlords? They will embark in the professions or in commercial pursuits and there is the piquant possibility that our grandchildren may succeed so well in commerce that they will be able to buy back the English countryside which they had loved long since and lost awhile.

## SCENE TEN - THE HOSPITAL OPENING

*Rosalind walks across the stage carrying a gold key.*

**Rose:** You've got your best hat on then Rosalind!

**Rosalind:** I've been given the honour of handing this over to Mrs Baird.

**Rose:** The wife of the Master of the Cottesmore Hunt. Whose mother formed the first cottage hospital to help with riding accidents.

**Susanna:** Hunting again you see; gets its claws in everywhere.

*A crowd has gathered as Rosalind hands over the key to Mrs Baird.*

**Baird:** The completion of this hospital is truly a great event. Erected to the honoured and loved memory of the men who in the terrible years of war gave their lives for their country and their souls to God, this hospital is of supreme worth, and this has been a sacred task. May I congratulate all those to whom honour is due as the result of their labour. And we must especially praise the fact that this hospital as it stands is free of debt.



**The crowd applauds and as it parts we see Rosalind with a young nurse (Betty) and her father (Cyril).**

**Rosalind:** And what do you think of our new hospital?

**Betty:** It's wonderful. The nurses' accommodation is better than my bedroom at home.

**Rosalind:** I hope you don't mind me saying how young you look.

**Betty:** I'm a probationer. Two years training, a salary and uniform provided.

**Cyril:** She'll be a fine addition to your staff.

**Rosalind:** Oh I'm just a helper; nothing to do with management.

**Cyril:** You're obviously very well respected.

**Rosalind:** It's up to people who really know what they're doing to make it a success now. But I can't tell you how pleased I am to have seen this day.

**Cyril:** I hope you don't think me presumptuous but I thought that after I dropped my daughter off I should spend some time exploring this idyllic county that everyone's talking about. Perhaps you'd be able to give me some suggestions on where to go and what to see. I have my own car.

**Rosalind:** I'm not sure I'm the right person to ask. There are others who have a much greater knowledge of our county.

**Cyril:** Of course, I understand. It was a pleasure meeting you. Wasn't it Betty?

**Rosalind:** *(This name pricks Rosalind)* My son knew a nurse called Betty.

**Betty:** I hope she looked after him well.

**Rosalind:** Yes; I wonder about that every day. Sometimes you know I think that everything I've been doing for the last years is because of her; whoever she was. *(To Cyril)* I'm sorry; I never asked your name.

**Cyril:** Cyril.



**Rosalind:** And I'd be delighted to help. In fact I know a very pretty little place to visit that would make an ideal first stop.

***As they exit Susanna and Rose once again appear.***

**Susanna:** And the rest, as they say, is history, as the young nurse Betty became Rosalind's daughter in law.

**Rose:** And every Christmas, Rosalind and Cyril took the crackers, sausage meat, port and plum pudding for the Hospital's Christmas Dinner. And talked to the patients and marvelled at the ever improving facilities.

***As they are saying this Daniel marches across the stage, holding a bag with a dead ferret in.***

## **SCENE ELEVEN - DECISIONS AND LEAVINGS**

*Daniel throws the bag on the kitchen table where Mary is sitting and knitting a pair of booties for their baby son.*

**Mary:** What's that?

**Daniel:** A dead ferret. Distemper.

**Mary:** Are the others alright?

**Daniel:** For now; but I'll never know. I should have left it there. Too bloody sentimental. I'm going soft. That's what happens.

**Mary:** What are you on about?

**Daniel:** We're leaving. I can't breathe here. I hate it.

**Mary:** And going where?

**Daniel:** The North East. I've been told I can get work as a miner.

**Mary:** Why would you want to do that?

**Daniel:** I need to be with other men; men who are willing to fight for each other.

**Mary:** But we have a son Daniel! We can't just drag him off on some whim.

**Daniel:** It's because we have a child that we must stand up to what is happening.

**Mary:** Can you please stop this.

**Daniel:** We went through hell! We were told the world would change.

**Mary:** It is! Just not in the way you want.

**Daniel:** Not in the way that is needed Mary. They'll drag us into something terrible all over again. Unless the working man comes together; an international brotherhood.

**Mary:** Daniel; it doesn't matter how many marches you go on, or how many flags you wave; it's something else you're missing. Can't you find that in our family?

**Daniel:** I never asked for one.

**Mary:** Well you didn't try very hard to stop it happening did you?

**Daniel:** I'm going. I am. I've decided. Tonight. And I want you both to come with me.

**Mary:** You don't really.

**Daniel:** I am trying to do what's right.

**Mary:** Then you go off and change the world Daniel. And one day I'll tell Michael that he never had to go off to war because of his dad.

**Daniel:** I'm your husband.

**Mary:** So I have to do what you order me to?

**Daniel:** And what will they say of you? In a place like this?

**Mary:** Who knows Daniel? But I won't be on my own will I? There are no end of women who have a child and no man to help. Bertha's sister has managed. I managed without you for four years; I can manage without you now.

**Daniel:** You'll come later perhaps. When I've found work and somewhere to live? A boy should be with his father.

**Mary:** Perhaps.

**Daniel:** Do you understand Mary?

***The sound of a hunting horn interrupts the conversation.***

**Daniel:** Let's hope the fox gets away today.

**Mary:** They do more often than people think. You better get going. The train will soon be leaving.

***Daniel comes towards her. She puts up her hand to stop him. He turns and leaves. The sound of a baby crying.***



***And immediately we snap into:***

***Patsy's house; Harry is sat in his wheelchair.***

**Harry:** Patsy! Mr Royce is here.

***Royce enters.***

**Royce:** I'm sorry for intruding.

**Patsy:** Is everything alright Mr Royce?

**Royce:** I have some good news. I've had a word with some people and when the new houses are built you will be given one of them.

**Harry:** That's wonderful.

**Patsy:** That's very kind of you; but I'm not sure you should have done that. There'll be other people who need them, just the same as us.

**Royce:** You deserve it. Your father deserves it.

**Patsy:** I know he does; but that's not the way it should happen. It should be fair; it shouldn't work like this.

**Royce:** Out of everyone that I know I really think that you and your father...

**Patsy:** But it can't be about the people that you know Mr Royce; can it? As you said, you're not on the housing committee. We'll put our name down like everyone else and we'll hope that we're lucky.

**Royce:** I have had to go to some trouble ...

***Harry gets up out of his chair; this is the first time that he has done so.***

**Harry:** If I may see you out Mr Royce.

***Patsy looks at her father in amazement, and is unsure what to do.***

**Patsy:** Dad! Be careful.

**Harry:** You've no need to worry lass.

**Royce:** I apologise; sincerely. I had no intention of offending or embarrassing either of you. The houses will not be ready for several months, but building has begun. Let's forget about it for now. And when it gets closer to the time we can perhaps think about it again.

**Patsy:** I'll make enquiries about the correct procedure that we need to follow tomorrow morning.

**Harry:** And I'll come with you.

**Royce:** Yes ... right ... that's excellent. And surely we must all be agreed that the main thing is that the houses are finally being built.

**Patsy:** But why did it take so long?

**Royce:** This is Rutland Patsy.

***And immediately we snap into:***

***The sound of a steamer horn. John enters carrying a case, accompanied by Eliza and Tom.***

**Eliza:** I still can't believe how far away it is. Canada.

**John:** There's some going as far as Australia.

**Tom:** You can still change your mind son. No-one will think badly of you.

**John:** I'm going Dad.

**Eliza:** The farm was always for you. We've lived most of our lives knowing that there's nothing certain under the sun but death and rent day. And I always wanted something different for you.

**John:** I'll have my own farm over there.

**Eliza:** But this is where you belong.

**John:** I've seen the world a little now and I want to see some more. And the man from the Colonisation Department said I'll be helping the Empire.

**Tom:** You've done enough for the Empire John.

**Eliza:** Putting ideas into people's heads; they should be ashamed.

**John:** It's new over there. That's the thing. Not like here; bogged down in old traditions and customs that some want to keep and some want to sweep away.

***Eliza takes out a prize winning medal from her handbag and gives it to John.***

**Eliza:** Take this; as good luck.

**John:** ***(Almost under his breath)*** One hundred and seventy four lambs from eighty ewes and forty seven theaves ...

**Eliza:**           *(Joining in with John so that they both finish the line)* ... three dead, two barren.

**John:**           The first of many I hope. Your dad would be proud of you.

**Eliza:**           I need to find a reason for wearing my hat now that you're leaving; and the Rutland Agricultural Show is as good as any. You're not going to be coming back to us are you?

**John:**           Not for a while. Unless it all goes wrong.

**Tom:**           You'll be alright; you've had your mother to teach you.

**John:**           It's farming dad. You never know.

**Tom:**           Aye.

***They embrace.***



## **SCENE TWELVE - THE ENDING**

**Rose:** So; that's our story just about done.

**Susanna:** But of course we've only seen a glimpse, a snapshot of lives that will hopefully carry on for many years to come. And every New Year's Eve across the county, as the old year ended and the new one came into being, dances were held in the new village halls as the Rutlanders returned to gather together once more. To celebrate the time that had passed ...

**Rose:** ... and to silently wish that things would either change for the better; or that their good luck would hold.

**All:** Through the ever-changing seasons  
Find your path and carry on  
In the heart of England  
We may stumble, we may falter,  
But we stand here arm in arm  
In the heart of England.  
We may stumble we may falter  
But we stand here arm in arm  
In this heart of England.  
Rutlanders Return

**Fin**

**Copyright Andy Barrett; September 2018**