

## MORE ON 'THE HOMES OF NOEL COWARD'

NCS member Terence Trimmer has sent some photographs that show the front door of Coward's home at The Studio, 17, Gerald Road. These views are not normally seen as the alleyway to them is usually 'locked.' Here they are with Terence in the first picture and a close-up of the door itself below. Many thanks Terence.



## JOHNNY MORRIS IS FOUND!

During the past few weeks the emails have been zooming through the 'net to the NCS including two concerning Silverlands the Actors' Orphanage. In HOME CHAT's early existence we featured an article concerning Silverlands and the planned reunion which took place later at Chertsey in Surrey. Part of the collection of photographs found at Noel's London Office at Cadogan Square included four photographs of Silverlands. These were given a home on the NCS website and featured the photograph shown above - taken when Noel and Marlene Dietrich visited the orphanage and were photographed with Johnny Morris. Johnny Morris spotted the photograph and sent the following:

"I just came across these photo's while looking for links to the old Silverlands Actors Orphanage - I am Johnny Morris, actually Jonathan Francis Morris - who attended Silverlands from the age of four until the age of 12. (1950-1958)

I remember the visit of Mr. Coward and Marlene Dietrich quite clearly - they made me go to bed early for the photograph!! Do you know how I can contact some of my old friends from Silverlands? My email for response is [jonfm123@msn.com](mailto:jonfm123@msn.com)."

Just a day later I received the following:

"For thirteen years I lived at Silverlands, the Actors' Orphanage in Chertsey

Surrey. Sir Noel was President much of the time I was there and I remember his visits fondly. I went to Silverlands right after World War II in 1946, December and left in 1959, when Silverlands closed and the children were moved to Watford. I finished school and emigrated to America, where I have lived ever since.

I am a writer and I work in Arts management here in the States. Three years ago, I wrote a memoir of my childhood at Silverlands — which was a very different childhood — we none of us were really orphans, and we were all of the theatre. It was the only such home that I know of and I left when it closed. Upon finishing my memoir, I had copies made because some of us former "orphans" held a reunion in Chertsey in 2000. A most emotional and wonderful experience. Forty years later and we were all still there — at least about fifty of us.

I have an agent in the states who has sent the manuscript around to a couple of publishers. It has received favorable comments, but they agree it would appeal to too small a group over here. My agent, who has no contacts in England thought it would go better over there. I do agree. Also, you may or may not know that the building of Silverlands has been very much in the news of late as the Home Office wants to turn it into a detention center for paedophiles, and there are many protests going on. But I am rambling. I thought perhaps you might have a suggestion as to who I could submit my manuscript to. Sir Noel

Coward was a big part of my childhood and I saw him again in New York and was touched that he remembered me. Any suggestions you can offer, I would be grateful for. My book is called "Silverlands: Growing up at the Actors' Orphanage." My mother was the late actress Joan White. Sincerely, Judy W. Staber"

We forwarded this email to Jon Morris and with the following result:

"Hello Judy, This is amazing!! I am Johnny Morris - actually Jonathan Francis Morris, now going by the name Jon.

I started browsing the web last Friday trying to find connections to Silverlands, where I spent much of my childhood - from 1950 to 1958 - and remember so fondly - even the spoons of malt and cod liver oil.

My search led me to the Noel Coward web page (including my goofy bedtime picture with Marlene Dietrich and Noel) and the immediate help of John Knowles.

## THE LUSTGARTEN INTERVIEW CONTINUED ...

In the last extract from this interview between Edgar Lustgarten and Noel Coward, reported in The Listener, we left them hanging with the following question regarding his knighthood:

*You perhaps remember rather an unpleasant telegram I sent you in congratulation-no, you've forgotten ...*

If it was really unpleasant, I should remember it.

*It wasn't really unpleasant. What it suggested was: what on earth did a man of your international distinction gain by accepting an honour which so many people of comparative unimportance have? What did you think was the advantage of having a knighthood?*

It is all very simple to explain. You don't say no to the Queen. The Queen Mother gave a birthday lunch for me with this in mind and I sat next to the Queen and she suddenly said to me, 'If I offered you a knighthood, would you accept it?' and so I said, 'Of course, Ma'am, I should be very honoured and very touched,' and I bent down to kiss her hand and disappeared from view. Princess Margaret who was at the other

Now John Knowles has just sent me a copy of your email which gives your US address as Old Chatham, NY. What is amazing is that Old Chatham is only a ten minutes from my New England home/office in Hancock, MA. - on the mountain just above the Old Shaker Village.

I am travelling in Vermont this week, so if you want, we should try to catch up with each other sometime next weekend... I look forward to hearing from you, it will be great to hear about old times and wonderful memories. Best wishes, Jon Morris" ... as someone once said ... it's so nice when a plan comes together! Editor

*Following this exchange of emails it was interesting to note a brief flurry on the egroup marvelousparty which included the following advice from Susan Peters (an NCS member) on publishing following a question on the subject by a fellow egroupy:*

"First, try to get an agent. How? Write

side of the table thought I'd disappeared entirely. If the Queen herself says, 'Would you accept it?' you can't say: 'Certainly not.' Also I like having it. I loved being knighted. I was awarded a knighthood for my services to the theatre. My services to the theatre have been considerable, and I think that for it to be royally recognised is very agreeable.

*What is so familiar to everybody is your enormous versatility in the theatre: actor, director, playwright, composer, lyricist. Which of these things do you regard as your primary function?*

When I'm acting I'm concentrating entirely on that. When I'm writing I'm concentrating on that. I really don't know how to answer that question. I don't know for which I'd rather be remembered by posterity. I think, as a writer. Because, for one thing, writing lives.

*Yes. The actor is merely a recollection.*

A recollection, yes, with a lot of gold dust on it.

the first three chapters of your book and do a good outline of the rest of it. A decent agent will be able to tell if what you've written is acceptable writing or if it stinks. No offense, but we all like to think we're the next great Author and we're not. You don't need an agent if you're sending this off to an academic type press or a small publisher. Your local library, if it's of any size at all, will have some reference books about publishers and agents. DO NOT SELF PUBLISH. Do not pay to have your book published. There is also electronic publishing, the so-called e-book. Someone else will have to help you there! And someone mentioned looking at other books of similar topic and seeing who published; good idea, especially if it's a small publisher and you can send your book directly. More likely to look at your book. If you want a bigger publisher, an agent is almost a necessity. Good luck! I like the concept - hope it flies for you. Susan Peters"

*I can only remember three plays that you've ever acted in which weren't your own: 'The Constant Nymph,' 'The Apple-cart' and 'The Second Man.' There haven't been any others, have there, since your 'Journey's End', in the Far East?*

Like all actors I look at the part and naturally, if I've written it for myself, it's liable to be a fairly good part. The Lunts made me do *The Second Man*. They brought it over and made me read it, because they'd been playing it in America. I thought it was right up my street. *The Constant Nymph* I was badgered into, and glad to be. Basil Dean came to see me and I said I would be thrilled to play it but not for more than a month because I had a contract to produce a play in America. So he said: 'Would you play it for the first month?' And I said: 'That's not fair, if I'm good. That's very dangerous for the play.' He said: 'Well, if we had somebody very, very fine to follow you?' I said: 'Fine. Who?' The only one I could think of he started his life, I'm proud to say, as my understudy-was John Gielgud. Johnnie understudied me in *The*