

BUCK UP!

By Paul Whitfield



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Cast

Child 1

Child 2

Child 3

Child 4 / Nancy

Child 5 / Ellen

Child 6 / Annie

Child 7

Child 8 / Annie Bindon Carter

Child 9 / Edith Jagger

Child 10 / Captain Scott

Child 11 / Arthur

Child 12 / Social Services Officer

Child 13 / Desmond's father

Child 14 / Desmond

Scene 1

Children enter from all sides playing a noisy and energetic game of tiggy.

Child 1

[To audience]

The year is 1934.

All children

[To audience]

We're the children of Painted Fabrics.

Child 3

[To audience]

Painted Fabrics is our home.

Child 4

[To audience]

Our Dads all work here...

Child 5

[To audience]

But we live here too...

Child 6

[To audience]

With our Mums and our brothers and sisters.

Child 7

[To audience]

Painted Fabrics has everything.

Child 8

[To audience]

Workshops...

Child 9 and 10

[To audience]

And houses...

Child 10 and 11

[To audience]

And gardens...

Child 11 and 12

[To audience]

And allotments growing vegetables...

Child 12 and 13

[To audience]

And loads of space to play.

Child 14

[To audience]

It's in Sheffield.

Child 1

[To audience]

At Meadowhead.

Child 2 and 3

[To audience]

And there's no better place in the world to be a kid!

Child 4

[To audience]

Some of us were born here...

Child 5

[To audience]

Some of us moved here...

Child 6

[To audience]

But we've all got something in common.

Child 7, 8 and 9

[To audience]

Our Dads.

Child 10

[To audience]

All of our Dads fought in the Great War...

Child 11

[To audience]

And all of them lost something.

Child 12

[To audience]

Some of them lost an arm...

Child 13

[To audience]

Some of them lost a leg...

Child 14

[To audience]

Some of them lost more than one.

Child 1

[To audience]

We say 'lost' but actually had them taken away...

Child 2

[To audience]

Blown off or cut off...

Child 3

[To audience]

And they ended up here.

Child 4

[To audience]

Painted Fabrics looks after them and gives them work.

Child 5

[To audience]

Men with missing arms and legs are normal to us.

Child 6

[To audience]

That's how they are here.

Child 7

[To audience]

When we go out and see men with two arms and two legs they look really strange.

Child 8 and 9

[To audience]

That's not our idea of normal.

Child 10

[To audience]

Here's one of our favourite games. Look.

***The children play the game where they pretend to be one of the disabled men
and the others have to guess who they are.***

Child 11

[Pointing]

Desmond's Dad!

Child 12

[Pointing]

Dougie's Dad!

Child 13

[Pointing]

Enid's Dad!

Child 10

[To audience]

Our Dads don't mind the game.

Child 11

[To audience]

If they see us playing, they give us advice on how to make our impersonations better!

Child 13

[To audience]

We're not posh here.

Child 14

[To audience]

We're just ordinary.

Child 1

[To audience]

As ordinary as you can get...

Child 2, 3 and 4

[To audience]

Apart from the fact we live here.

Scene 2

Child 5, 6 and 7

[To audience]

But the people who set this place up...

Child 8

[To audience]

The people that run Painted Fabrics...

Child 9

[To audience]

Blimey, are they posh!

Child 10

[To audience]

You can't get much posher!

Child 11

[To audience]

We'll pretend to be them.

Child 12

[To audience]

See if you can guess which ones we are.

**Children make 'statues' of Mrs Carter (Child 8), Edith Jagger (Child 9) and
Captain Scott (Child 10).**

Child 1

They can't guess.

Child 2

They don't know.

Child 3

They never met them.

Child 4

[To audience]

So we'll have to tell you.

Mrs Carter (Child 8) statue comes to life.

Child 5

[To audience]

This is Mrs Carter.

Child 6

[To audience]

Mrs Annie Bindon Carter.

Child 5

[To audience]

The whole place was her idea.

Child 6

[To audience]

She's married to Mr Carter of Carter's Chemists...

Child 7

[To audience]

Yes, that Carter...

Child 5

[To audience]

'Carter's Little Liver Pills'

Child 6 and 7

[To audience]

So they're really rich.

Child 5

[To audience]

Mr Carter is in a wheelchair...

Child 6

[To audience]

Not from the war...

Child 7

[To audience]

Some sort of illness...

Child 8

[To audience]

But I think that's why she cares about men like our dads.

Child 1

[To audience]

Then there's Edith Jagger...

Edith Jagger (Child 9) statue comes to life.

Child 2

[To audience]

She's Mrs Carter's friend.

Child 1

[To audience]

And she's a designer.

Child 2

[To audience]

She's all artistic and creative.

Capt Scott (Child 10) statue comes to life.

Child 3

[To audience]

And Captain Scott.

Child 4

[To audience]

He's like a sort of manager.

Child 3

[To audience]

He was an officer in the Army

Child 4

[To audience]

So he likes giving orders.

Captain Scott

Out of my way, child.

Child 11

[To audience]

They might all be posh, but they're not snobby.

Child 12

[To audience]

They're a bit snobby.

Child 11

[To audience]

Maybe a bit, but they're kind...

Child 13

[To audience]

Most of the time...

Child 12

[To audience]

Apart from Captain Scott...

Child 11

[To audience]

He's alright.

Child 12

[To audience]

He's bossy.

Captain Scott

Move, child, move.

Child14

[To audience]

Our dads like it here.

Child 1

[To audience]

They like the work.

Child 14

[To audience]

They make all sorts of things...

Child 1

[To audience]

Tea cosies and table mats...

Child 2

[To audience]

Dresses and shawls...

Child 3

[To audience]

Scarves and handkerchiefs...

Child 1

[To audience]

Fabrics and hangings...

Child 4

[To audience]

And it's all for fancy places like Claridges...

Child 5

[To audience]

That's a posh hotel in London...

Child 4

[To audience]

Or the Queens Hotel in Leeds.

Child 6

[To audience]

Not the sort of stuff families like ours could ever afford...

Child 7

[To audience]

Not in our wildest dreams.

Scene 3

Child 8

[To audience]

Our dads don't get paid very much...

Child 11

[To audience]

But probably more than they'd get anywhere else.

Child 9

[To audience]

And Mrs Carter keeps the rent as low as she can.

Child 10

[To audience]

Even so, some of our dads sometimes need to ask for extra help.

Desmond 14

[To audience]

My Dad had the Social Services round. It went like this...

Children recreate social services visit.

Desmond's Father 13

So, even with the low rent and the money I make here, it's a struggle to keep the children properly.

Social Services 12

And what do you expect from us, Mr Brookes?

Desmond's Father 13

I was hoping for a little extra help, that's all. After all I did in the war and that.

Social Services 12

That's a rather fine Grandfather clock you have there, Mr Brookes.

Desmond's Father 13

Thank you. It's been passed down through the family. My Dad loved it.

Social Services 12

It might fetch a tidy sum of money.

Desmond's Father 13

You want me to sell it?

Social Services 12

It would help to tide you over.

Desmond's Father 13

I lost both my legs fighting in the war and you want me to sell the only precious thing I have?

Social Services 12

I'm trying to be helpful, Mr Brookes. We can't help you any more than we already have.

Desmond's Father 13

I was only 19.

Social Services 12

I'm sorry, Mr Brookes, the country appreciates your sacrifice, but there's nothing I can do. Sell your clock.

Scene 4

Child 11

[To audience]

But it's still better here than it would be outside.

Child 1

[To audience]

These days, life is hard for everyone...

Child 2

[To audience]

Even for families with dads who have all their limbs.

Child 3

[To audience]

Work is tough to find.

Child 11

[To audience]

And at least there's work here.

Child 4 and 5

[To audience]

And we get great presents at Christmas!

Child 11

[To audience]

Mrs Carter is really kind to us children.

Child 4

[To audience]

There's a big Christmas party every year...

Child 5

[To audience]

And fancy dress parades...

Child 4

[To audience]

I was a butterfly!

Child 5

[To audience]

With the most amazing costumes...

Child 6

[To audience]

I was a dragon!

Child 7

[To audience]

And plays...

Child 7 and 8

[To audience]

We put on plays!

Child 8

[To audience]

We did 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'.

Child 7

[To audience]

That's by Shakespeare.

Child 9

[To audience]

Loads of us were fairies...

Child 5

[To audience]

You should have seen the costumes...

Child 6

[To audience]

They were the bee's knees!

Child 4

[To audience]

They were the cat's pyjamas!

Scene 5

Child 6

[To audience]

There's another game we like.

Child 7

[To audience]

It's a bit like putting on a play, but just for ourselves.

Child 8

[To audience]

We choose someone's Dad and we tell their story.

Child 6 and 7

[To audience]

We all join in to act it out.

Child 8

Who is it going to be today?

Child 1

Me!

Child 2

Me!

Child 3

Me!

Nancy 4

Me!

Child 7

Alright, you four line up. Hands out.

Children play 'one potato...' to decide whose story to tell. Nancy wins.

Nancy 4

Yes!

One child as Annie, one as Ellen, one as Arthur. Others as readers.

Nancy 4

[To audience]

My name is Nancy Fisher and I'm 11 years old.

This is the story of my Dad, Arthur Fisher.

I'm going to start the story in 1918, the last year of the Great War.

One day, my Gran got a letter from the Army...

Child 1

[Army letter]

“I regret to inform you that a report has been received from the War Office to the effect that...”

Child 2

[Army letter]

“Gunner A Fisher...”

Child 1

[Army letter]

“Has been wounded on the...”

Child 2

[Army letter]

“26th day of April 1918.”

Child 1

[Army letter]

“The nature of the wound is...”

Child 3

[Army letter]

“Gunshot wound. Legs...”

Child 2

[Army letter]

“Mild.”

Ellen 5

He’s been wounded.

Annie 6

Oh no.

Ellen 5

But it says ‘mild’...

Annie 6

Thank God.

Ellen 5

It's only 'mild'...

Annie 6

He'll be coming home!

Ellen 5

And his wound is only mild.

Nancy 4

[To audience]

Then Mum had a letter from Dad himself.

Arthur 11

[Letter]

"Well dear, I am so sorry to tell you I got wounded on Sunday 21st and do not let it worry you..."

Annie 6

It was only mild...

Ellen 5

The Army told us...

Arthur 11

[Letter]

"I am so sorry to say that I have got both my legs off..."

Ellen 5

What?

Annie 6

Oh no!

Ellen 5

Is that what the Army means by 'mild'?

Arthur 11

[Letter]

“I thank God that I am alive. Do not worry about me being limbless as they have guaranteed to fit us up with artificial legs. Well dear, my arms are quite alright. I have no pain whatsoever. Goodbye from your ever loving sweetheart Arthur.”

Ellen 5

My poor boy. What are we going to do?

Annie 6

Do? We're going to carry on, of course.

Ellen 5

Nothing will be the same again.

Annie 6

He's the same man. He's still my Arthur. He'd be my Arthur if he'd lost all his limbs.

Ellen 5

You were going to get married.

Annie 6

And we still will, if he wants me.

Ellen 5

No-one would think less of you if you changed your mind.

Annie 6

I would never do that.

Ellen 5

He won't be able to stand by you in Church, or walk beside you back up the aisle.

Annie 6

That doesn't matter. I'll kneel by his sick bed and marry him there if that's what I have to do.

Nancy 4

[To audience]

So Mum wrote back to Dad...

Annie 6

[Letter]

“Well darling I can tell you it was a terrible blow when I got the news of you but do not worry in any way love as I am bucking up now dear as the future is not as bad as it seemed at first. Well dear you must not think I will turn against you in any way through it. No dear I shall only love and honour you all the more for it and I am going to marry you dear as soon as ever it is possible. I am and always will be your ever loving and devoted sweetheart.”

Nancy 4

[To audience]

In another letter, to his mother, Dad explained a bit more about what had happened...

Arthur 11

[Letter]

“It happened about 5am on Sunday. I was in bed. I can tell you I thought the world had come to an end at first, but we must thank the Lord I got away as I did and have still got my life, that’s more than a good many of them can say. Good night and God bless you all till we meet again. Cheers and keep smiling. Buck up. Arthur.”

Nancy 4

[To audience]

That was their favourite saying “buck up”, him and Mum both. If ever things got hard or I’d start to complain...

Arthur 11 / Annie 6

Buck up!

Nancy 4

[To audience]

That’s what they’d say.

They waited for Dad to get home from hospital and in 1919, after the war was over, they got married. It was even reported in the paper...

The children narrate and create images / action to ‘illustrate’ the narration.

Child 1

[Newspaper report]

“A wedding of more than ordinary interest took place at Walkley Parish Church...”

Child 2

[Newspaper report]

“The bridegroom being Gunner A Fisher...”

Child 3

[Newspaper report]

“And the bride Miss A Bell.”

Child 7

[Newspaper report]

“Gunner Fisher was badly wounded in the “Great Push”...”

Child 8

[Newspaper report]

“When both legs were blown off by a shell.”

Child 2

[Newspaper report]

“Gunner Fisher...”

Child 9

[Newspaper report]

“Who is a Sheffielder...”

Child 1

[Newspaper report]

“Was employed at Hadfields, Newhall Road, when he joined up.”

Nancy

[To audience]

Hadfields were a steelworks making shells for the war, so he never needed to join up. He could have stayed at home.

Child 3

[Newspaper report]

Ssshhh, Nancy. Don't interrupt.

Nancy
Sorry.

Child 1
[Newspaper report]

“By a collection amongst the work people at Hadfields a good sum of money has been raised for the sorely afflicted hero.”

Child 2
[Newspaper report]

“It is highly gratifying to learn that Messrs Hadfield have offered Gunner Fisher a post for life.”

Nancy
[To audience]

Which was the least they could do really, but lucky for me Dad didn't stay there, he came here, to Painted Fabrics, which turned out better for him 'cos painting designs is better than working in a hot, nasty steelworks, and I get to grow up here with all my friends!

END

Additional Information

The Great War is what people at the time called World War 1

“Bucking up” means to pick yourself up mentally and get on with life.

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