
HASTINGS HIGH SCHOOL

presents

The Yeomen of the Guard



MUNICIPAL THEATRE HASTINGS, JUNE 28, 29, 30, JULY 1, 1954



The Story Behind The Opera

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THE Yeoman of the Guard began when W. S. Gilbert gazed idly at a poster on the station platform while waiting for his train. The poster, advertising the Tower Furnishing Company, depicted the Tower of London. This gave him the idea for a new opera with a beefeater as a "picturesque central figure"; his first intention was to burlesque it—to make the opera another *Sorcerer*. On second thoughts it became a "romantic and dramatic piece" with the setting in Elizabethan times. The title was changed from the Tower of London to The Tower Warden, next to The Beefeater and finally to The Yeomen of the Guard, or The Merryman and The Maid.

Sullivan wrote in his diary, "Gilbert told me that he had given up the subject over which there had been so much dispute (charm and clockwork) and had found another about the Tower of London, an entirely new departure. Much relieved." And so he might be, Gilbert had persevered for years with his idea of the magic lozenge plot which had been the cause of several disagreements. Now it seemed that Gilbert had put aside the idea.

The Yeomen of the Guard was a new departure for Gilbert and Sullivan. When he learned of the plot Sullivan was immensely pleased—for once "no topsy-turvydom, very human, and funny also". Here no longer was the stock Gilbertian-treatment of a thoroughly farcical situation in a thoroughly serious manner. For the first time Gilbert would not tilt at any British institution as he had at the peers in *Iolanthe* or politicians in *Pinafore*. Indeed he had been seen stalking about the Tower of London seriously absorbing the atmosphere of that grim building. He hoped that his new libretto would assist Sullivan's desire to write more serious music for he had been restless and conscious that his music must always be subordinated to the tone of the plot.

The Golden Legend, Sullivan's oratorio, had great success. There had been a tremendous performance in the Adbert Hall by Royal Command and Her Majesty had encouraged Sullivan. "You ought to write a grand opera. You would do it so well." Her views had been kept before Sullivan's notice for some time by the critics. Writing of the *Mikado* one newspaper commented: "We venture to question whether Sir Arthur Sullivan is quite doing justice to himself by continuing to write in

this style. There is, of course, no doubt that it pays while symphonies don't; but there is also no doubt that enduring fame and a place among the great composers cannot be gained by a long course of setting verses of refined burlesque to music pretty and graceful but of a character that must of necessity be ephemeral."

For Sullivan, however, basking in the society life—the gambling table at Monte Carlo, and the dinner with the Prince of Wales—the financial rewards of the operas were essential if he was to remain among the best of society. At the same time his Victorian conscience tortured him. He felt himself unworthy of the muse but he need not have worried. To-day his serious music is regarded as second-rate, for his musical genius lay not in creative work but in interpretation. That was the secret of the success of the partnership. Sullivan set in musical form the spirit of Gilbert's words.

The composition of a new opera never ran smoothly and the Yeomen was no exception. Sullivan had returned to Monte Carlo to work on the new lyrics. Suddenly he jibbed. It was useless to carry on, other people were imitating their success and outdoing it. Dorothy, a new light opera written by Cellier had proved a success, running for five hundred nights. Gilbert wrote back emphasizing that there was really no need for panic.

"We have the best theatre, the best company the best composer and (though I say it) the best librettist in England working together, and we are world known and as much an institution as Westminster Abbey—and to scatter this splendid organization because Dorothy has run 500 nights is to my way of thinking to give up a gold mine."

His arguments won the day and Sullivan came to heel. Returning to England he made his usual frantic efforts to have the music ready in time for rehearsals. Often he worked through the night till six in the morning, though troubled by his illness which was finally to prove fatal.

It was then that for the first time Sullivan found himself unable to write satisfactory music for one of Gilbert's lyrics. Several versions were tried but none satisfied Gilbert rhythmically. Finally Sullivan confessed defeat. Now Gilbert often had some tune in mind which gave him the rhythm, but Sullivan never wished to know these in case he could not get the tune out of his mind. In despair this time he begged Gilbert to hum the tune, in this case a sea shanty, a corruption of an old Cornish carol which Gilbert had heard from the sailors aboard his yacht. From this appeared the music of "I have a song to sing, O!" with the haunting refrain "Heighdy, heighdy" etc., which became the theme tune of the opera.

Rehearsals, too, proceeded along the customary stormy paths. Sullivan's diary records, "Full rehearsal. Had regular flareup with Gilbert between the parts. He worried everyone and irritated me beyond bearing—in one of his worst moods, I can't stand it any longer and get as angry and irritable as he is. Eventually we made it up."

As opening night came near Gilbert's irritation increased from the fear that the opera was too serious. He now had cold feet. On the day of the first performance he protested to Sullivan that the first five numbers in a professedly comic opera were in turn, tearful, serious, grim, sentimental and again sentimental. As a compromise they agreed to cut one of the sentimental songs.

Before the curtain rose on the first act of the opening night Gilbert became more panicky. This scene begins with Phoebe seated alone on the stage at her spinning wheel. Gilbert kept dashing on and off the stage. "Is everything all right? Are you sure everything is all right?" With that he kissed the actress, danced about feverishly and vanished only to return a moment later. This performance was repeated several times until the actress begged him to go before she too became nervous. He went to spend the evening, not walking the streets as he often did on first nights, but watching a rival pageant play about Elizabethan times; as usual, however, he was back at the Savoy in time for the curtain.

Gilbert's fears were once more proved unjustified, but the Yeomen of the Guard was never so successful as the previous Gilbert and Sullivan mixture of *The Mikado*, for example. Both Gilbert and Sullivan, however, rated the

Yeomen highly. When the stage properties from this play were auctioned in 1891, Gilbert bought the executioner's block and axe, remarking that he wished to have them "as a relic of the best of our joint work at the Savoy." The opera had its share of the human element which Sullivan had sighed for. In the words and the music Gilbert and Sullivan caught something of the spirit of the Elizabethan age. An "age of beauty and brutality," it has been called; while Queen Elizabeth and her courtiers listened to the exquisite madrigals and glowing poetry of her gifted subjects her servants were busy in another place busily extracting by the rack and other tortures confessions of crimes against the State from poor wretches willing to make any confession real or bogus to end their torments.

Sullivan's haunting melody and Gilbert's grim contrasting words have caught something of this strange duality of the age in the madrigal *Strange Adventure*.

*Strange Adventure! Maiden wedded
To a groom she's never seen!
Groom about to be beheaded
In an hour on Tower Green!
Tower, Tower, Tower Green.*

Gilbert's *Jack Point* is a far cry from *Ko-Ko* or the *Major-General*. He is a tragic comic figure. Gilbert intended that "Jack Point should die and that the end of the opera should be a tragedy." In the character of *Jack Point* is reflected something of Gilbert's own attitude. In the song "I've wisdom from the East . . ." *Point* sings,

"I can teach you with a quip if I've a mind;
I can trick you into learning with a laugh;
Oh winnow all my jolly and you find
A grain or two of truth among the chaff!"

Fifty years after the death of Sullivan posterity has confounded both the Victorian critics who hailed his genius for serious music, and also Sullivan's uneasy conscience that he had frittered away his talent at comic opera when he should have left behind so much more of his serious music. The 1951 Festival of Britain to celebrate British achievement began with a festival of British music at the new Royal Festival Hall. All the great names of British music through the centuries appeared on the programme—Purcell, Elgar, etc. but Sullivan's serious work was judged unworthy of a place among the best. Across the Thames at the Savoy Theatre, Sir Malcolm Sargent, one of Britain's most famous conductors was conducting a triumphant Festival season of Gilbert and Sullivan.

The Yeomen of the Guard

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ACT I

Phoebe Meryll, daughter of Sergeant Meryll, of the Yeomen of the Guard is distressed because Colonel Fairfax is under sentence of death in the Tower for sorcery. The head jailer, Wilfred Shadbolt, in love with Phoebe, is jealous as he sees her grief. Her father, whose life Fairfax has twice saved, hopes that his son Leonard, newly appointed to the Yeomen, will bring a reprieve from Court; but Leonard arrives without it. They plan that Leonard will hide and Fairfax will impersonate him. Phoebe undertakes to get the keys to Fairfax's cell from Shadbolt. It now transpires that Fairfax's cousin has had him charged with sorcery, hoping to inherit his estate if Fairfax dies unmarried. Fairfax induces the Lieutenant of the Tower to search for and to pay some girl to marry him in order to frustrate his kinsman. The Lieutenant goes away and by chance sees Jack Point, a Jester, and Elsie Maynard, a wandering singer, entertaining a large crowd. Point tells the Lieutenant that Elsie's mother is ill and they need money to cure her, so the officer puts his proposition to Elsie. Assured that Fairfax is to die immediately after the marriage and with the consent of Point to whom she is half betrothed, Elsie accepts the bribe. She is taken away blindfolded so that she will not see what her husband looks like and at once married to Fairfax, who is so distracted that he does not know who is becoming his wife. He shaves off his beard and moustache, dons the uniform of a Yeoman and goes on duty. The crowd gathers for the execution, Fairfax (as Leonard) and two other Yeomen go to fetch the prisoner but return to say that he has escaped. Point is horrified. Elsie, aghast, little knowing he is her husband, faints in the arms of Fairfax.

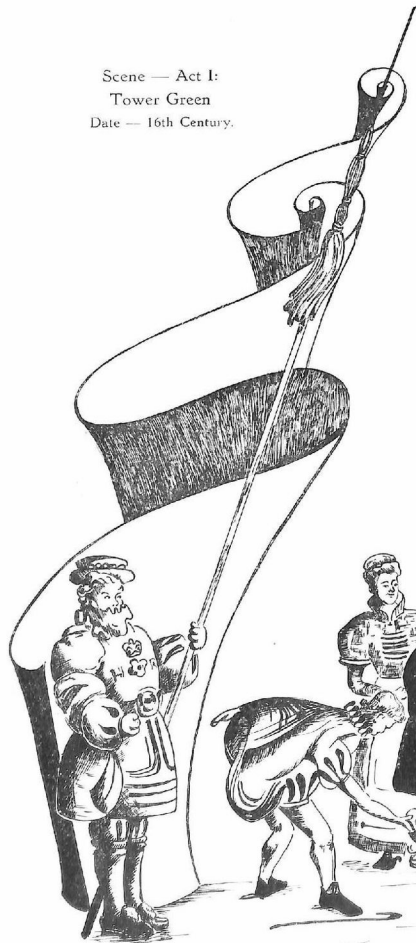


The Merryman and the Maid

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ACT II

Tower Green by Moonlight. Point, mourning the loss of Elsie, meets Wilfred and promises to make him a Jester if he will swear that he shot the escaping Fairfax. Wilfred consents. Fairfax now learns from Dame Carruthers, Housekeeper of the Tower, that Elsie is his wife. Elsie thinks Fairfax is Leonard Meryll; she has fallen in love with him, but not dreaming he is her husband, tries to stop him making love to her. His lovemaking is interrupted by the sound of a shot, and Wilfred and Point rush in to say that Fairfax has been shot while swimming the river. Point now tells Elsie she is free to marry him but Fairfax declaring that the Jester "knows not how to woo" proceeds to give him so lifelike a lesson that both Point and Phoebe grow alarmed. Phoebe begins to weep and when Wilfred taunts her she unwittingly suggests the truth that the Yeoman is not Leonard at all. Wilfred realizes that Leonard is really Fairfax, so to buy his silence Phoebe promises to marry the jailer. But by now the real Leonard enters with a reprieve which had been delayed by Fairfax's scheming cousin. He is followed by Sergeant Meryll and Dame Carruthers. The former realizes his complicity in the escape of Fairfax, and knowing that Dame Carruthers can inform on him he follows Phoebe's example and bribes the dame with an offer of marriage. The crowd begins to assemble again; the Lieutenant of the Tower brings Elsie news that her husband is alive and free. She recoils for she knows her love for the supposed Leonard; but when Fairfax enters she recognises him and joyfully lies to him, dropping one tear "at the moan of the merryman moping mum," poor Jack Point, who, as Fairfax embraces his wife, falls insensible at their feet.

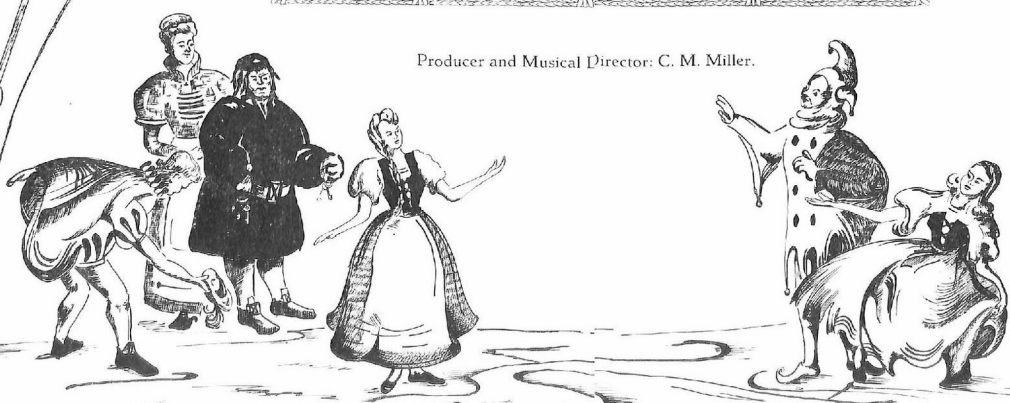
Scene — Act I:
Tower Green
Date — 16th Century.



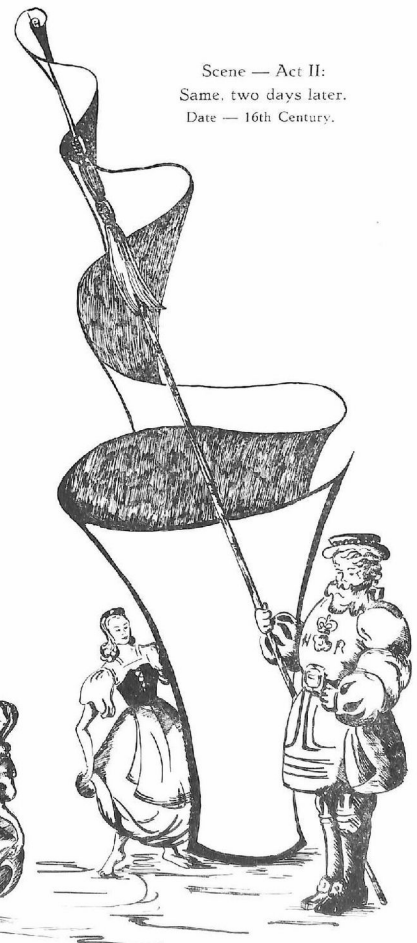
Dramatis Personae

Sir Richard Cholmondeley (Lieutenant of the Tower)	W. R. Wills
Colonel Fairfax (under sentence of death)	J. Rundle
Sergeant Meryll (of the Yeomen of the Guard)	J. Unwin
Leonard Meryll (his son)	A. Mitchell
Jack Point (a strolling jester)	B. Hawthorne
Wilfred Shadbolt (Head Jailer and assistant Tormentor)	G. E. Orbell
The Headsman	J. Currie
First Yeoman	D. Apperley
Second Yeoman	A. Henderson
First Citizen	H. Jones
Second Citizen	R. Meehan
Elsie Maynard (a Strolling Singer)	Leslie Beer
Phoebe Meryll (Sergeant Meryll's daughter)	Gareth Jones
Dame Carruthers (Housekeeper to the Tower)	Annette Kirk
Kate (her niece)	Eileen Taylor
Chorus of Yeomen of the Guard, Gentlemen, Citizens.	

Producer and Musical Director: C. M. Miller.



Scene — Act II:
Same, two days later.
Date — 16th Century.



Musical Numbers

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ACT I

- 1—SONG (Phoebe) When Maiden loves she sits and sighs.
- 2—DOUBLE CHORUS (People and Yeomen): Tower Warders under orders.
SOLO (2nd Yeoman): This the autumn.
- 3—SONG WITH CHORUS (Dame Carruthers and Yeomen) When our gallant Norman foes.
- 4—TRIO (Phoebe, Leonard, Meryll): Alas! I waver to and fro.
- 5—BALLAD (Fairfax): Is life a boon?
- 6—CHORUS (Crowd, Elsie, Point): Here's a man of jollity.
- 7—DUET (Elsie and Point): I have a song to sing.
- 8—TRIO (Elsie, Point, Lieutenant): How say you, maiden, will you wed?
- 9—RECITATIVE AND SONG (Point): I've jibe and joke and quip and crank.
- 10—RECIT. AND SONG (Elsie): 'Tis done! I am a bride.
- 11—SONG (Phoebe): Were I thy bride.
- 12—FINALE Oh, Sergeant Meryll, it is true—



Musical Numbers

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ACT II

- 1—CHORUS: Night has spread her pall once more.
SOLO (Dame Carruthers): Warders are ye?
- 2—SONG (Point): Oh! a private Buffoon is a light-hearted loon.
- 3—DUET (Point & Wilfred): Hereupon we're both agreed.
- 4—BALLAD (Fairfax): Free from his letters grim.
- 5—QUARTET (Kate, Dame, Fairfax, Meryll): Strange adventure.
- 6—SCENE (Elsie, Phoebe, Dame, Fairfax, Wilfred, Point, Lieutenant, Meryll, and Chorus): Hark! What was that sir?
- 7—TRIO (Elsie, Phoebe, Fairfax):
A man who would woo a fair maid.
- 8—QUARTET (Elsie, Phoebe, Fairfax, Point):
When a wooer goes a-wooing.
- 9—FINALE: Comes the pretty young bride.





School Production

The present production has been in course of preparation for two years. Immediately on the conclusion of the "Pirates of Penzance" season in 1952, preliminary investigations such as the study of libretto and music of several operas took place in order to make a suitable selection. Further exploratory work, assessing available musical and dramatic talent by voice testing, followed. Satisfactory results having been obtained, the decision was made and the "Yeomen of the Guard" was scheduled for presentation in 1954.

But the real task is only beginning. Late afternoons and long evenings for many months to come will be necessary to teach soloists how to sing, how to speak and how to act. There will be days of disappointment when the chorus, lifeless and stolid, will stand unresponsive to frantic appeals; and then the recurring question: "Can they do it?" But youthful enthusiasm in the end is always equal to the occasion and doubts are slowly dispelled.

The task of making or borrowing costumes, properties and scenery becomes another burden on the producer and assistants. But willing followers are there to "jump on the handwagon" and soon almost every school department has some special responsibility.

The last weeks speed by and the show is soon over. Has it been worth while? A hundred performers have learned to work as a team, to spend their leisure time in a common purpose for the common good. They have become familiar with the music of Arthur Sullivan and with the wit of William Gilbert. They have improved their speech, their voice production and their deportment. All those on and those off the stage share the satisfaction of having added another successful achievement to the credit of their School. Those who have accepted these self-imposed tasks reap handsome rewards in the knowledge that their work has been of value.



Beyond the Classroom



Operatic work is only one of many activities that go on in a Secondary School. By its very nature a great deal of publicity accrues to a presentation of this magnitude, and it is therefore possible that many people are unaware of the existence and scope of what are commonly called "extra-mural activities."

The Education Department lays down a Syllabus of Work which must be adhered to for a given number of hours per week. Extra-mural activities are all those additional services initiated by the Principal and voluntarily carried on by his Staff, in order to provide a balanced "diet" for those willing to take it. On this "menu" will be found organised team games—football, basketball, cricket and hockey. Here the emphasis is laid not only on the need for physical fitness but equally on the cultivation of team spirit and good sportsmanship with all that that term implies—to fight for success, to win with humility, and to lose with dignity.

To illustrate let us take a particular sport. Over 200 boys practise football twice a week after School, and play in the Saturday competitions. Each team has its own master to coach them, and guide them in principles of general conduct.

The player learns to give up some "self" for the good of the team and has as inspiration the time and energy willingly given by the master in his own free time that the team may develop. Hockey, Basketball and Cricket teams train after school and compete in Saturday competitions in similar circumstances.

Other activities conducted after school hours in free time by pupils and staff alike include Tennis, Shooting, Softball, Debating, Drama, Choral Work, Music Appreciation, Chess, Library Work, and the Crusader Union. Pupils get far more value from these activities than merely increased skill. In all of them pupils gradually acquire the higher form of self-discipline and of social standards which supplements the training within the classroom to fit them for a full and worthy adult life. The adolescent who fails to take advantage of these opportunities freely given in free time misses much that may be regretted later.

The biggest single team is the Cadet Corps, whose function is to develop the qualities of alertness, good bearing, ability to work in a team and to co-operate with others, a sense of responsibility, obedience, leadership and general self-reliance. It is the principal training ground where such latent qualities can be detected and developed, but only if those interested are prepared to give additional time to receive instruction and to attend holiday camps.

To those who have spent a lifetime observing the effects of this work on participating pupils it is abundantly clear that these activities have a place of real importance in the School. It would seem almost that the influence of the school on the individual is in direct proportion to the support that he or she gives to its various activities.

In these circumstances it may not be out of place to urge parents to promote the welfare of the children and of the School by seeing that their sons and daughters take a full part in extra mural activities preferably in an active capacity and when that is not possible, as a moral supporter.

Chorus of Yeomen of the Guard . . .

A. H. Preston, A. Henderson, E. E. Trask, P. J. Bate, D. H. Glass, E. K. Henderson, D. J. Apperley, O. Hutchinson, J. Buxton, F. A. Payne, M. D. Thawley, G. W. Morris, C. W. Bennett, H. C. Latton.

Chorus of People . . .

A. Mitchell, R. N. Morse, I. J. Heard, G. Mulvanah, P. Bannister, D. J. Fear, I. Rockel, J. K. Boyd, G. Thomas, D. Cohen, J. B. Currie, H. Jones, J. Kale, R. Bell, R. Anstis, M. L. Hullett, J. C. Croucher, G. Hare, R. N. Meehan, T. G. Morris.

Nancy Nightingale, Pat Scott, Judith Hullett, Margot Miller, Robin Barden, Judith White, Judith Hill, Margaret Gilbertson, Hester Grudnoff, Norma Druzianic, Jean Morgan, Annette Crisp, Pat Thompson, Barbara Wright, Noeline Doherty, Pamela Mayes, Anne Davy, Barbara Hewitt, Anne Hewitt, Elizabeth Boyd, Barbara Druzianic, Jacqueline Carr, Valerie Prior, Heather Farquharson, Judith Thomason, Judith Paynter, Doreen Drury, Angela Bell, Glenys Riggir, Noeline Morley, Janet Holmes, Pamela Skittrup, Glenda Jones, Josephine Fowler, Susan Crichton, Margaret Crichton, June Crisp, Jennifer Halstead, Josephine Talbot, Josephine Young, Audrey Powell, Glenys Hoskins, Jena Wilford, Beth Stewart, Noelene d'Ott, Delcie Westerman.

Orchestra . . .

Conductor: Mr. C. T. Ferbrache.

Piano	-	-	-	-	-	-	Miss J. Wallace
1st Violins	Mr L. Wilkinson,	Miss A. Stevens,	Mr F. Benyon,	Miss M. Ward			
2nd Violins	-	-	-	-	Mr. L. Bowen,	G. Wallace	
Flutes	-	-	-	-	Mr. Cedric White,	Mrs. E. Hocking	
Clarinet	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr H. Bush
Cornet	-	-	-	-	-	-	V. Wilkinson
Trombone	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. W. Gosper
Drums and Effects	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. B. Tuckwell
Bass	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mrs D. Smith

Wardrobe

	Misses Green, Trotter, Sim, Porter, Harris, Macdonald, & Sybil Hickey	
Stage Sets	-	Mr. R. Garrick
Stage Scenery, Posters	-	Miss Rust and Art Classes
Programme	Mr. Fowler, Mr. Fargher, Mr. Fuller and Art Classes	
Properties	-	Mr. G. Fuller
Make-up	Staff and Messrs. W. Clark and J. Bailey	
Prompt	-	Hinemoa Baird
Call-boy	-	Sybil Hickey
Assistant Rehearsal Pianists	John Rundle and Margot Miller	
Lighting	-	Mr. L. Williams
Stage Manager	-	Mr. H. Spence
Assistant Stage Manager	-	I. T. Young
Business Managers	Messrs. R. J. Fowler and R. W. S. Fargher	