

Doon The Watter

A Scots comedy

by Dave Buchanan

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CAST (in order of appearance):

George, a pensioner

Willie, a pensioner

Deckchair Attendant, male, twenties or late teens

Salvation Army Officer, male or female, could be any age

Miss Cahn, the trip organizer, female, fifties

Setting - the beach and promenade at Rothesay

Time - late 1990s

Opening music: "Going Doon the Watter (Tae The Ferr)"

The scene is a beach in the Scottish seaside resort of Rothesay. Backstage is a promenade with railings and a lifebelt, with central steps leading down to the beach level. There is a streetlight R, and fairy lights the whole length of the promenade. In the distance is blue sky with clouds (cyclorama). On the beach are some deckchairs, stacked against the promenade wall and beside them a large sign with the legend: "Deckchairs for hire. £1.50 for whole day." At centrestage is an area of sand, stones, rocks, shells, seaweed, and various bits of debris. L is a substantial rock-pool. Lights are at 7/8

FX: sound of seagulls and sea

Enter running, from UR, George and Willie, two old age pensioners who both have carrier bags. Both wear bunnets; George looks dapper, dressed in a navy blazer and flannels, while Willie is much scruffier. George is lively and dominant, whereas Willie is no intellectual, and is gullible to an extreme degree. Both are panting

George Quick, Willie, hide! I think they'll just maybe can see us.

George ducks down on the steps, followed by Willie

Willie Who are we running from, Geordie?

George The secret police. The Stasi.

Willie Nastase? Did he not use to play tennis?

George Not Nastase, Willie. Oh never mind. Look, I think she's gone.

Willie *(still breathing heavily)* Jings, I'm knackered. I can't run any more.

George *(gets up)* Willie, I wouldn't call what you were doing running. It was a sort of slow-mo jog, you know like in "Chariots of Fire".

George demonstrates slow-motion running

Look, Willie, deckchairs. Just the job.

George goes down and picks up one of the deckchairs

Let's see if I can remember how to do this.

He assembles the deckchair CL and puts his carrier bag on it

There you are. No bother.

Willie crosses to L with his deckchair. He stands looking at it, scratching his head. During the following dialogue he tries vainly to assemble it

(Goes to the steps and sits down) Here we are, Willie. The perfect spot. The beach and promenade at Rothesay. What a panorama.

Willie A pano- what, Geordie?

George Panorama. *(He starts to take off his socks and shoes)* The view from here to Loch Striven must rank as one of the greatest in the world, bar none. I mean, that compares with Bondi Beach or the Copacabana.

Willie The coka banana? What's that? A fruit drink, Geordie?

George rolls up his trousers, picks up his socks and shoes and stands gingerly on the sand

George Ah, that is positively therapeutic. Sand in the toeses. The ultimate in sensuousness.

He deposits his socks and shoes beside the righthand deckchair. Meanwhile Willie has nearly assembled his deckchair

Are you not taking off your socks and shoes, Willie?

Willie No, I don't think so.

George You don't know what you're missing. Come on, you can even go paddling.

Willie But the tide's out, Geordie.

George You can paddle in that rock-pool over there. *(Points L)*

Willie Right, you're on.

Willie starts to take his socks and shoes off

Meanwhile George looks casually over towards R

George I bet she's still looking for us, Willie.

Willie Who's looking for us, Geordie?

George Barbie. Miss Cahn. She wants us to play bingo.

Willie And do we not want to play bingo, Geordie?

George *(goes onto the promenade)* It's the principle of the thing, Willie. It'll be bingo first, then beach games, then before you know it, it'll be bloody donkey rides.

Willie I mind doing donkey rides. It was good fun. Must have been donkey's years ago.

Willie goes over to the rock-pool and dips his toes gingerly in the water

George *(leaning on the railing)* That's quite funny, Willie. Donkey's years.

Willie Eh?

George Never mind. What were you saying?

Willie I was saying, Geordie, that I haven't been doon the watter for donkey's years.

Willie sits on one of the rocks

George Aye you're right, Willie. In my case twenty one years ago. Glaswegians used to flock out here for their holidays. Rothesay, Dunoon, Millport ...

Willie Saltcoats-by-the-sea.

George It was mainly Rothesay we went to.

(Sings) Dirrum-a-doo, dirrum-a-day,

Dirrum-a-doo ma daddy-o,

Dirrum-a-doo, dirrum-a-day,

The day we went tae Rothesay-o.

I used to take the whole family, the wife and the kids, by train from Glasgow to Wemyss Bay, and then by ferry. That was in the fifties, the Glasgow Fair fortnight. The train was crowded, the ferry was crowded. And Rothesay was crowded. There was all sorts of things to do. Beach games, Punch and Judy, donkey rides, sandcastle competitions, and at night dancing in the Pavilion. Over there. *(He motions L)* The place was just hooching with people, Willie. Not any more. That was the days before motor cars and package holidays.

Willie We went to Saltcoats every year. It was great, Geordie.

George Now it's Tenerife and Ibiza and the Costa Packet. For the three Ss - sun, sand and sangria. And for the twentysomethings, the fourth S - sex. We're a bit past that now, Willie.

Willie What do you mean, Geordie?

George I mean, Willie, that neither of us is a sexual athlete any more.

Willie Well I used to be one in the old days, Geordie.

George What?

Willie Oh aye. I used to do it three or four times a day. If I was feeling up to it, I could do it double that!

George You must have been some man, Willie.

Willie Aye, but I can't manage it any more now. I've got a dicky ticker, you see!

George (*goes back down onto the sand*) Willie, are we talking about the same thing here? What did you do three or four times a day?

Willie Training. I used to specialise in the 220 yards and 440 yards. But I could manage the half mile at a pinch.

George You *were* some man, Willie.

A pause. He walks DR

FX: lights gradually to half

There was another time I remember. Doon the watter. Not the fifties. I'm talking of an earlier era. It was between the wars. When I was about ten or eleven, maybe. Must have been about 1930-31. I remember being taken by my Mum and Dad to the Rothesay Illuminations.

FX: spotlight on George, and lights down

We lived in the East End, and we took a tram to the station at Bridgeton Cross. Now this was in the evening, because we had our tea first. We took the train to Craigendoran, I think it was, and we caught the steamer there. It was paddle steamers in those days. I remember it was a beautiful new boat called the Jeanie Deans. By jings it was smart. Then we sailed to Rothesay -

FX: sound of horn

- and the boat sat at anchor in the bay, just off Rothesay Pier. It was dark by this time, must have been the end of August or early September.

FX: fairy lights and streetlight on

And we saw the lights all along the promenade, and then they let off the fireworks.

FX: sound of fireworks

It was magic. It was just something you never forget. And another thing I remember, Willie, was dancing on the boat, because I've got this vision of my Mum and Dad dancing, and us kids were allowed to dance as well. And we were back home just after midnight. All these years ago.

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Plot Summary

Two pensioners, George and Willie, arrive on the promenade at Rothesay, on an old folks' outing. For George the trip is particularly nostalgic. The organiser of the trip, Miss Cahn, is determined that the two OAPs shall take part in all the activities including bingo, but George and Willie are equally determined to do their own thing. The scene is set for a series of incidents involving amongst other things the Salvation Army, and rich comic dialogue as the two oldsters reflect on life and the world as they see it.

Duration: approx. 30 minutes

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