

Bryan Forbes:

An Inventory of His Collection of Edith Evans at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Forbes, Bryan, 1926-2013
Title:	Bryan Forbes Collection of Edith Evans
Dates:	1923-2001
Extent:	2 document boxes, 3 custom boxes, 1 oversize box (osb) (4.4 linear feet)
Abstract:	The Bryan Forbes Collection of Edith Evans contains Forbes' correspondence with and about Edith Evans, which Forbes used in writing his biography of her. It also contains Evans' correspondence, diaries, memorabilia, and photographs.
Call Number:	Performing Arts Collection PA-0401
Language:	English
Access:	Open for research; access to personal effects requires an appointment in advance.

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Purchase, 2016 (15-07-023-P)
Processed by:	Elizabeth E. Preston, 2016
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Dame Edith Evans (1888-1976) was one of the most distinguished actresses of the British stage and screen. Known particularly for her classical performances of Elizabethan and Restoration comedies, she also originated roles in several major works of contemporary playwrights like George Bernard Shaw. Notable film credits include *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1952), *The Nun's Story* (1959), and *The Whisperers* (1967). Evans died on October 14, 1976 at the age of 88.

Bryan Forbes (1926-2013) began his career as a film actor before focusing his career on screenwriting and directing. He directed Evans in two films – *The Whisperers* and *The Madwoman of Chaillot* (1969) and became a close friend. Evans named Forbes her official biographer before she died, and a great deal of Forbes' collection was given to him by Evans in order to write this book. The result, *Ned's Girl: The Life of Edith Evans*, was published in 1977. Forbes died on May 8, 2013 at the age of 86.

Scope and Contents

The Bryan Forbes Collection of Edith Evans contains correspondence, diaries, manuscripts, and photographs that document the career of Dame Edith Evans. Bryan Forbes, British film director, writer, and producer, collected some of the material as he researched and produced a televised profile of Evans in 1973 and published a biography of her in 1977.

Much of the correspondence is between Evans and Forbes in the last few years of her life. The two corresponded regularly as personal friends and as professional collaborators on film and biographical projects. Also included is a letter to Evans from George Bernard Shaw dated 17 September 1923. It features a drawing of Evans as the Serpent, one of her roles in Shaw's five-play series *Back to Methuselah*. Other correspondents include drama critic H. R. Barbor, actors Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies and John Gielgud, and social fixture Stephen Tennant. Additional correspondence can be found in the scrapbooks, which are not accounted for in the list of correspondents at the end of this guide. Scrapbooks dated 1944-1956 contain letters and holiday cards from leading theatre professionals of the day including Noël Coward and Laurence Olivier, along with memorabilia and ephemera.

In addition to correspondence, the collection includes three of Evans' diaries, material about the publication of *Ned's Girl: The Life of Edith Evans*, Forbes' biography of Evans, bound editions of his memorial address for Evans' funeral, and photographs. Many of the photographs are portraits of Evans as an actor, and capture her in costume for her roles. Some were taken during rehearsals while she is performing. There are also portraits taken later in Evans' life, likely as part of production of the televised profile in 1973.

Related Material

Other Evans materials at the Ransom Center include the Edith Evans Papers and the Henry Hurford Janes Collection of Edith Evans. Additional materials relating to Evans can be found in several other collections at the Ransom Center, including the papers of Frith Banbury, Chris Castor, Basil Langton, Gloria Swanson, Donald Wolfitt, and Stark Young. The B. J. Simmons Collection has costume designs for productions in which Evans performed, and the photography collection of George Bernard Shaw includes photos of Evans.

Separated Material

Published volumes were transferred to the Ransom Center Library and are listed in the University of Texas [Library Catalog](#).

Materials transferred to the Ransom Center's Personal Effects Collection include: figurine by Agatha Walker of Evans as Mrs. Sullen in George Farquhar's *The Beaux' Stratagem*; Hollywood Foreign Press Association Golden Globe award, Best Actress in a Drama, 1967-1968; Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin award, 1967; Society of Film and Television Arts, British Film Academy Award for Best British Actress, 1967; Variety Club of Great Britain Award to Dame Edith Evans, 1967; and a wooden cutout of Dame Edith Evans in "Tiger Cats."

Agreement, Bryan Forbes, Ltd., 1975	Container 1.1
Cards, undated, 1954	Container 1.2
Clippings, 1955-1976	Container 1.3
Correspondence	
Edith Evans	
George Bernard Shaw, 1923	Container 1.4
General, undated, 1924-1976	Container 1.5-1.9
Bryan Forbes	
Gielgud, John, 1977-1999	Container 1.10-1.11
Kempson, Rachel, 1977	Container 1.12
Publication of <i>Ned's Girl</i> , 1977, 2000	Container 1.13
Theatre Museum, 2001	Container 1.14
<i>Daphne Laureola</i> (presentation copy), by James Bridie	Container 1.15
Descriptions of Evans, undated	Container 1.16
Diary (Edith Evans), 1948-1949; 1967	Container 1.17-2.1
Dictionary of National Biography, Dame Edith Evans entry, 1981	Container 2.2
Drawings and caricatures, undated, 1924	Container 6.3
Estate of Edith Evans (Edith Mary Booth), 1974-2001	Container 2.3
Funeral Program, Edith Evans, 1976	Container 2.4
Funeral Program, Eric Portman, 1976	Container 2.5
Gatehouse auction booklet, 1955	Container 2.6
Memorial address for Edith Evans, given by Bryan Forbes (5 copies), 10 December 1976	Container 2.7-2.8
National Registration Act card, 1915	Container 2.9

<i>Ned's Girl</i> , draft excerpt, 1977	Container 2.10
<i>Ned's Girl</i> , reviews, 1977	Container 2.11
Photographs (*oversize materials removed to box 6)	Container 2.12-2.13*
Play programs, 1910, 1951	Container 2.14
Poetry, undated	Container 2.15
Profile of Edith Evans, <i>The Times</i> (draft and published version), 5 March 1973	Container 2.16
Royal Shakespeare Theatre program	Container 6.1
Transcript of Bryan Forbes' tribute to Edith Evans, broadcast on BBC Radio Four, 5 November 1976	Container 2.17
TV Times article ("My Friend, Dame Edith: Through the Eyes of Bryan Forbes") about Forbes' television special on Evans, 1973	Container 6.2
Scrapbook, 1944-1948	Container 3
Scrapbook, 1949-1952	Container 4
Scrapbook, 1953-1956	Container 5
Oversize material	Container 6

Index of Correspondents

- Barbor, H. R. (Herbert Reginald)--1.5
- Bradbrook, M. C. (Muriel Clara)--1.7
- Ffrangcon-Davies, Gwen--1.5, 1.6
- Gielgud, John--1.10, 1.11
- Jones, Dedwydd--1.9
- Kempson, Rachel--1.12
- Komisarjevsky, Theodore--1.6
- Laughlin, Michael S.--1.7
- Nicholson, Nigel--1.14
- Shaw, Bernard--1.5
- Sheldo, Ronald--1.7
- Tennant, Stephen--3