

= Terry @-@ Thomas =

Terry @-@ Thomas (born Thomas Terry Hoar Stevens ; 10 July 1911 ? 8 January 1990) was an English comedian and character actor who became known to a worldwide audience through his many films during the 1950s and 1960s . He often portrayed disreputable members of the upper classes , especially cads , toffs and bounders , using his distinctive voice ; his costume and props tended to include a monocle , waistcoat and cigarette holder . His striking dress sense was set off by a 1 ? 3 @-@ inch (8 @-@ 5 mm) gap between his two upper front teeth .

Born in London , Terry @-@ Thomas made his film debut , uncredited , in *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933) . He spent several years appearing in smaller roles , before wartime service with Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA) and *Stars in Battledress* . The experience helped sharpen his cabaret and revue act , increased his public profile and proved instrumental in the development of his successful comic stage routine . Upon his demobilisation , he starred in *Piccadilly Hayride* on the London stage and was the star of the first comedy series on British television , *How Do You View ?* (1949) . He appeared on various BBC radio shows , and made a successful transition into British films . His most creative period was the 1950s when he appeared in *Private 's Progress* (1956) , *The Green Man* (1956) , *Blue Murder at St Trinian 's* (1957) , *I 'm All Right Jack* (1959) and *Carlton @-@ Browne of the F.O.* (1959) .

From the early 1960s Terry @-@ Thomas began appearing in American films , coarsening his already unsubtle screen character in films such as *Bachelor Flat* , *It 's a Mad , Mad , Mad , Mad World* and *How to Murder Your Wife* . From the mid @-@ 1960s he frequently starred in European films , in roles such as Sir Reginald in the successful French film *La Grande Vadrouille* . In 1971 Terry @-@ Thomas was diagnosed with Parkinson 's disease , which slowly brought his career to a conclusion : his last film role was in 1980 . He spent much of his fortune on medical treatment and , shortly before his death , was living in poverty , existing on charity from the Actors ' Benevolent Fund . A charity gala was held in his honour , which raised sufficient funds for him to live his remaining time in a nursing home .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life : 1911 ? 33 = = =

Terry @-@ Thomas was born Thomas Terry Hoar Stevens at 53 Lichfield Grove , Finchley , North London . He was the third of four children born to Ernest Frederick Stevens , managing director of a butcher 's business at Smithfield Market and part @-@ time amateur actor , and his wife Ellen Elizabeth Stevens (née Hoar) . As a child , Terry @-@ Thomas was often referred to as Tom , the diminutive used by his family . He led a generally happy childhood , but believed that his parents secretly desired a daughter in his place . By the time he reached adolescence , his parents ' marriage had failed and both became alcoholics . In an attempt to bring them together , Terry @-@ Thomas often entertained them by performing impromptu slapstick routines , reciting jokes , and singing and dancing around the family home . The performances seldom worked , and his father became increasingly removed from his family . His parents had divorced by the 1920s .

In 1921 Terry @-@ Thomas began to nurture his distinctive , well @-@ spoken voice , reasoning that " using good speech automatically suggested that you were well @-@ educated and made people look up to you " . He used the speech of the actor Owen Nares as a basis for his own delivery . Terry @-@ Thomas became fascinated by the stage , and regularly attended the Golders Green Hippodrome to see the latest shows . It was there that he developed an interest in fashion , and adopted the debonair dress @-@ sense of his hero Douglas Fairbanks . Terry @-@ Thomas attended Fernbank School in Hendon Lane , Finchley , which was a welcome escape from the stresses of his parents ' break @-@ up . When he was 13 , he transferred to Ardingly College , a public school in West Sussex . He excelled in Latin and Geography and briefly took up drama . The latter subject later led to his expulsion from the school , after his frequent and inappropriate use of

ad lib during lessons . He also took up a position in the school jazz band , first playing the ukulele and then percussion and additionally he often performed comedy dancing routines to the band 's music .

Terry @-@ Thomas enjoyed his time at Ardingly , and relished his association with upper middle class school friends . His academic abilities were modest , and he only came to the notice of staff through his frequent tomfoolery . Although he initially felt intimidated by his school surroundings , his confidence grew as he put on " a bold , undiluted and sustained show ofchutzpah " , according to his biographer , Graham McCann . On his return home to Finchley to start a break in 1927 , his more mature manner impressed the family 's housekeeper Kate Dixon , who seduced the young student at the family home . He stayed at Ardingly for one more term and returned home to London , but made no plans to further his education or start long @-@ term work . Instead , he accepted a temporary position at Smithfield Market , where he earned 15 shillings a week as a junior transport clerk for the Union Cold Storage Company . By his own admission he never stopped " farting around " and often kept his colleagues entertained with impersonations of the Hunchback of Notre @-@ Dame and Erich von Stroheim . He also invented various characters including Colonel Featherstonehaugh @-@ Bumleigh and Cora Chessington @-@ Crabbe , and frequently recited comic stories involving them to his colleagues . His characterisations soon came to the notice of the company 's management who prompted him to enrol in the company 's amateur drama club . He made his début with the drama company in the role of Lord Trench in The Dover Road which was staged at the Fortune Theatre , London . The production was popular with audiences , and he subsequently became a regular performer in many amateur productions .

Terry @-@ Thomas made his professional stage début on 11 April 1930 at a social evening organised by the Union of Electric Railwayman 's Dining Club in South Kensington . He was billed as Thos Stevens , but only appeared as a minor turn . His performance brought heckles from the drunken audience , but earned him a commission of 30 shillings . After this he played a few minor roles in Gilbert and Sullivan productions by the Edgware Operatic Society at the Scala Theatre . In 1933 he left Smithfield Market to work briefly with a friend at an electrical shop before he became travelling salesman of electrical equipment . He enjoyed the job and relished being able to dress up in elaborate clothing in order to make his pitch . In his spare time he began playing the ukulele with a local jazz band called the Rhythm Maniacs . He took up dancing and formed a partnership with a sister of Jessie Matthews . The act starred in local exhibitions and at minor venues , and they earned well from it . News soon travelled of the couple 's talent , and they were engaged as ballroom dancers at a hall in Cricklewood . He found the dance @-@ style too restrictive and he left the act to try other aspects of entertainment .

= = = Early performances : 1933 ? 39 = = =

By 1933 Terry @-@ Thomas had moved out of Finchley and into a friend 's flat ; the friend was a film extra who introduced him to the idea of working in the industry . Terry @-@ Thomas made his uncredited film debut in the 1933 film , The Private Life of Henry VIII , which starred Charles Laughton in the title role . Between 1933 and 1941 Terry @-@ Thomas appeared in 16 films , as an uncredited extra in all but one ; he later said that " this work suited me down to the ground . It wasn 't really like work to me . I got an enormous kick out of it " . His first speaking role came in the 1935 Buddy Rogers comedy Once in a Million where he shouted " A thousand ! " during an auction . During the 1936 musical comedy This 'll Make You Whistle , starring Jack Buchanan , he permanently damaged his hearing as a result of jumping into a water tank . In between his film work he developed his cabaret act and was employed as a dance teacher at the Aida Foster School of Dancing in Golders Green .

During this period he billed himself as Thomas (or Thos) Stevens , but reorganised the name to its backward spelling of Mot Snevets ; the name did not last long and he changed it to Thomas Terry . He soon realised that people were mistaking him as a relative of Dame Ellen Terry , so inverted the name to Terry Thomas . He did not add the hyphen until 1947 , and later explained that it was " not for snob reasons but to tie the two names together . They didn 't mean much apart ; together they

made a trade name " : the hyphen was also " to match the gap in his front teeth " . By now he was developing a unique sense of style both on and off stage . In order to avoid staining his fingers with smoke , he used a cigarette holder and later purchased " the most irresistible holder in Dunhill 's . It was slightly outré because it was made of lacquered , black whangee ... with a gold band twisting neatly round it " . Adding to his look were a " monocle , raffish waistcoat and red carnation " . He later wrote that " sartorially I was an eccentric . But I knew that underneath the clothes I was very much a conservative Englishman who would have loved to have been a genuine eccentric " .

In 1937 , Terry @-@ Thomas met the South African dancer and choreographer Ida Florence Patlansky , who went by the stage @-@ name Pat Patlanski , while she was auditioning in London for a partner for her flamenco dancing act . Patlanski was keen to employ Terry @-@ Thomas as a comedian rather than a dancer , and they established a cabaret double @-@ act billed as " Terri and Patlanski " , which was immediately popular with audiences . The couple became romantically involved and married on 3 February 1938 at Marylebone register office , afterwards moving to 29 Bronwen Court in St John 's Wood . Despite the success of Terri and Patlanski , the act only lasted three months and they took on small engagements on the cabaret circuit . On 6 June 1938 Terry @-@ Thomas made his first radio broadcast on the BBC London Regional dance programme Friends to Tea . He later recounted that " I didn 't give a very good performance ... I was a dismal failure " . At the end of the summer of 1938 they were hired by the bandleader Don Rico , who incorporated them into his orchestra , with Patlanski playing the piano and Terry @-@ Thomas acting as the compère .

= = = Second World War = = =

The Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA) was formed in 1938 in order to provide entertainment to the British Armed Forces ; Terry @-@ Thomas and Patlanski signed up in 1939 and during the Phoney War were posted to France , where they appeared in a variety show . From early in their marriage , Patlanski had started having affairs , a move which prompted Terry @-@ Thomas to reciprocate ; he made sure that he was sent on tour to France where a girlfriend was due to perform , although Patlanski accompanied him on the trip . During the tour , Terry @-@ Thomas ensured Patlanski was sent back to the UK to enable him to continue his affair . On his return to Britain , he continued with his solo variety act , while also acting as the head of the cabaret section of ENSA at the Theatre Royal , Drury Lane , where he clashed regularly with his counterparts running the drama sections , Sir Seymour Hicks and Lilian Braithwaite . Terry @-@ Thomas aimed to produce " good shows , sophisticated , impeccable and highly polished " , which included the violinist Eugene Pini playing light classical music , and the Gainsborough Girls chorus line .

In April 1942 Terry @-@ Thomas received his call @-@ up papers ; he later wrote that " it would have seemed rather rude and ungrateful to refuse " ; as a result , he left ENSA and reported to the Royal Corps of Signals training depot in Ossett , West Yorkshire . Within two weeks of his arrival he hired Ossett Town Hall and staged a concert , which included a freshly @-@ written sketch about his feet , which had been suffering in his army boots . After basic training he was promoted to the rank of corporal and he applied for a commission . He was turned down because training had caused a duodenal ulcer , and his hearing was still problematic ; as a result he was downgraded from A1 to B1 fitness at the start of 1943 .

Terry @-@ Thomas continued to appear in cabaret and variety shows while in the army , including at the Astoria cinema in York , where he was seen by George Black . Black established the entertainment troupe , Stars in Battledress , which was composed of entertainers who were serving in the forces , and he invited Terry @-@ Thomas to join . In February 1943 he appeared in his first Stars in Battledress show at London 's Olympia , where he introduced the sketch " Technical Hitch " . This involved him portraying a harassed BBC announcer introducing records that are missing . In order to cover up for the absent records he would use his vocal range of four and a half octaves to mimic the singers ; he included " impersonations of Britain 's clipped crooner Noël Coward , the African @-@ American bass @-@ baritone Paul Robeson , the Peruvian songbird Yma Sumac , the Austrian tenor Richard Tauber and ... the entire Luton Girls Choir " . The show went on a national

tour , with the stand @-@ up comedian Charlie Chester as compere , during which Terry @-@ Thomas refined and polished his act and finished as " one of the most prominent and influential members of Stars in Battledress " .

Terry @-@ Thomas , along with his Stars in Battledress unit , travelled through Britain and Europe on a tour that lasted several months . After the tour , and with his demobilisation approaching , he took compassionate leave in order to have free time while still receiving army pay . During his absence he went on a tour of the UK organised by George Black , accompanied on the piano by a former colonel , Harry Sutcliffe . Terry @-@ Thomas finished the war as a sergeant , and was finally demobbed on 1 April 1946 .

= = = Early post @-@ war work : 1946 ? 55 = = =

The ENSA and Stars in Battledress tours of Britain and Europe had raised Terry @-@ Thomas 's profile and , by October 1946 , he was appearing alongside Sid Field in Piccadilly Hayride at the Prince of Wales Theatre , London . The show was described by Graham McCann as " the West End 's biggest money @-@ spinner for years " . Terry @-@ Thomas compered the show as well as appearing in some of the sketches , including his own " Technical Hitch " routine . In 1959 he described the effect of Piccadilly Hayride on his career , saying " This show made me overnight . I 'd arrived " . Ivor Brown , writing in The Observer , remarked on the " glorious rag of BBC modes , moods and intonations by Mr. Terry Thomas , a grand discovery " . Within three weeks of starting his run , Terry @-@ Thomas was invited to appear at the Royal Variety Performance on 4 November 1946 at the London Palladium . Piccadilly Hayride ran for 778 performances and ended on 17 January 1948 . The show was seen by over a million people and earned £ 350 @,@ 000 at the box office . In conjunction with Piccadilly Hayride , Terry @-@ Thomas undertook a number of other additional one @-@ off appearances in cabaret and private functions . He also appeared in editions of Variety Bandbox and Workers ' Playtime on BBC radio . His ever @-@ evolving act consisted of imitations , including that of his friend , the musician Leslie Hutchinson (known as " Hutch ") ; sketches , including " Technical Hitch " ; urbane monologues , and " languid shaggy dog stories " .

At the end of his run with Piccadilly Hayride , Terry @-@ Thomas took a three @-@ week break to recover from nervous exhaustion and a recurrence of his peptic ulcer . He went back to cabaret and acted as a compere at the London Palladium before making his radio breakthrough on 12 October 1948 with his own series on the BBC Home Service . Consisting of a " mixture of sketches , solo routines , musical interludes and a range of popular and topical star guests " , To Town with Terry was broadcast weekly and ran for 24 episodes until 28 March 1949 . He was disappointed with the series , saying " I was never totally satisfied with [it] ... The perfectionist in me always made me aware of anything that was less than first class " . He also appeared in his first post @-@ war film , A Date with a Dream , in 1949 , alongside his wife .

On 26 October 1949 Terry @-@ Thomas wrote and starred in a new series on the BBC Television Service , How Do You View ? , noted for being the first comedy series on British television . The programme was based around an on @-@ screen persona of Terry @-@ Thomas as " a glamorous , mischievous and discreetly cash @-@ strapped man @-@ about @-@ town " , introducing a series of sketches in which he appeared alongside Peter Butterworth as his chauffeur ; Janet Brown (Butterworth 's real @-@ life wife) ; Avril Angers ; H.C. Walton as the family retainer , Moulting ; and Diana Dors . The programme was broadcast live and often included Terry @-@ Thomas walking through control rooms and corridors of the BBC 's Lime Grove and Alexandra Palace studios . The author and historian Mark Lewisohn described the series as being " inventive ... truly televisual and not just a radio programme in costume " . The series ran until 21 December 1949 ; a second series followed between April and May 1950 , with Sid Colin taking over the scripting duties and Terry @-@ Thomas providing additional material . By the third series , which was broadcast between November 1950 and February 1951 , the audience reached four million viewers . In total there were five series of How Do You View ? ; the final episode was broadcast on 11 June 1952 . Writing about Terry @-@ Thomas on television , Wilfred Greatorex observed that " he has ...

physical attributes that make him a gift to visual entertainment : a large , rather gaunt face , pre-fabricated for close ups ; the notorious space of one third of an inch between his two most prominent top teeth ; a mouth that is full of expression . Add to these pictorial [sic] advantages his eight inch cigarette holder and Eddie Cantor eyes " .

In between filming *How Do You View ?* , Terry Thomas continued performing on radio as well as in cabaret , in Britain and increasingly the US . In October and November 1949 he appeared at the Palmer House Night Club , Chicago ; in June 1951 he appeared at The Wedgwood Room , Waldorf Astoria Hotel , New York , and between 22 December 1951 and 29 February 1952 he returned to the London Palladium for 109 performances in *Humpty Dumpty* . In September 1952 he travelled to Malaysia to entertain British troops in a series of concert parties , before returning to the UK to appear in the Royal Variety Performance in November . He finished the year in South Africa , as Honourable Idle Jack in *Dick Whittington* , which finished in January 1953 ; he considered the pantomime to be " so tatty and unrehearsed it was pathetic " .

In June 1953 Terry Thomas broadcast the pilot episode of the radio show , *Top of the Town* ; the show was successful and the BBC commissioned a series of 16 episodes , which ran between November 1953 and February 1954 . In between recording sessions , he appeared at the London Palladium in the revue *Fun and the Fair* , with George Formby and the Billy Cotton band , from October 1953 . *Fun and the Fair* was unsuccessful at the box office and closed on 19 December 1953 , after 138 performances . Terry Thomas then reprised his role of Idle Jack for a run of performances in the Granada theatres of Sutton and Woolwich , and the Finsbury Park Empire , which ran to the end of January 1954 . That year , he separated from Patlanski following an increase in domestic tension and the plethora of affairs in which they had both indulged . Patlanski moved out of the shared home , and the couple lived separate lives ; the press did not report the separation until 1957 .

Terry Thomas spent the 1954 summer season performing at the Winter Gardens Pavilion , Blackpool before starring in a second series of *Top of the Town* , which ran from October 1954 to February 1955 . At the end of the series he appeared as Hubert Crone in the play *Room for Two* , which had a UK tour prior to a run at the Prince of Wales Theatre , London . The last stop on the UK tour was at the Brighton Hippodrome , where Terry Thomas broke his arm on stage ; he returned to the show five days later when the tour reached London . He later joked that " the audience roared with laughter when I fell and made horrible faces , so much so that I considered breaking the other arm for an encore " . The London run was not a success and the show closed after 48 performances .

== British film years : 1956 ? 61 ==

In February 1956 Terry Thomas appeared on *Desert Island Discs* , and chose two songs from his " *Technical Hitch* " routine as part of his selection . Later that year he appeared in his first major film roles : Charles Boughtflower in *The Green Man* , and Major Hitchcock , " a charlatan military officer on the take " , in *Private's Progress* , directed by the Boulting brothers . Terry Thomas only appeared in the latter film briefly , with a total screen time of about ten minutes , but his biographer Graham McCann thought that the actor " came close to stealing the show from the central character " , Windrush played by Ian Carmichael . Terry Thomas 's depiction of the character was not how he wished to play it : his desired choice was that of a " silly ass " sergeant major , but the role was written as a strict , alcohol and prescription drug dependent Army officer . He was initially disappointed with the role , and turned it down but , after being persuaded to accept it by his agent , he embraced its possibilities . One of his lines , delivered in his clipped upper class voice , was " You 're an absolute shower " , which became a catchphrase for him . The Boulting brothers were so impressed with Terry Thomas 's performance that they signed him up to a five film deal .

The first of the five films was *Brothers in Law* , in which Terry Thomas played the spiv Alfred Green , a performance which was based on Sid Field 's characterisation in *Piccadilly Hayride* . Roy Boulting later recounted that one short scene with Terry Thomas , Richard Attenborough and

Ian Carmichael took 107 takes because of Terry @-@ Thomas 's unfamiliarity with filming techniques ; he initially struggled to hit his marks , or give his line and move on , while still acting . Filming the scene took two days and Boulting described it as " an unique experience for him , and had a wonderful after @-@ effect " . Following *Brothers in Law* he was cast as Romney Carlton @-@ Ricketts in *Blue Murder at St Trinian 's* by producers Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat , before again appearing for the Boulting brothers in the cameo role of a local policeman in *Happy Is the Bride* . Terry @-@ Thomas starred in two further films in 1957 . The first was as Bertrand Welch in *Lucky Jim* , an adaptation of the novel of the same name by Kingsley Amis . Although Amis thought that Terry @-@ Thomas has been " totally miscast as Bertrand , the posturing painter and leading shit " of the book , the critic for *The Manchester Guardian* considered Terry @-@ Thomas as being " the nearest to a complete success " in the film , in a portrayal that " suggests possibilities for more serious roles " . His final part of 1957 was Lord Henry Mayley in *The Naked Truth* ; this brought him together with Peter Sellers for the first time , and the two of them appeared frequently together over the next few years in scenes in which , Graham McCann considered that each actor 's performance " highlight [ed] what was special about the other " . During one scene Terry @-@ Thomas was dumped in a near @-@ freezing lake , and his health was affected for some time afterwards .

In 1958 Terry @-@ Thomas received the first of his two film award nominations , the BAFTA Award for the " Best British Actor in 1959 " for the part of Ivan in the Metro @-@ Goldwyn @-@ Mayer film *Tom Thumb* . He later described the film as his second favourite ; he appeared opposite Sellers for much of his screen time , and later said that " my part was perfect , but Peter 's was bloody awful . He wasn 't difficult about it , but he knew it " . Terry @-@ Thomas was still suffering with poor health following the filming of *The Naked Truth* when he suffered an attack of lumbago ; filming went on for 85 days during 1957 ? 58 , and he took painkillers to enable him to continue . The role was physically demanding , and required him to ride a horse , run long distances and fight in a duel . He stated that he fought and ran " just as [he] had seen Douglas Fairbanks Snr do in *The Mark of Zorro* " . Towards the end of filming , Terry @-@ Thomas went to a Christmas party at the Trocadero , where he drank champagne , as well as taking codeine tablets , and was subsequently arrested on suspicion of being drunk and disorderly . He considered the arresting policemen to have been rude , and " their attitude made me extremely angry and when I get angry ... I just go completely off my nut " . The case came to court on 14 March 1958 and his legal team from Metro @-@ Goldwyn @-@ Mayer provided a medical report which showed Terry @-@ Thomas had been on a course of prescription painkillers due to a gruelling filming schedule ; along with inconsistencies in the arresting policemen 's notes , the case proved inconclusive and was dismissed . For much of the rest of 1958 , Terry @-@ Thomas appeared on stage at the London Palladium in *Large as Life* , alongside Harry Secombe , Eric Sykes and Hattie Jacques . He played one of the Three Musketeers in one sketch and had another turn called " Filling the Gap " ; the show ran for a total of 380 performances between May and December 1958 . He also released his first record , *Strictly T @-@ T* , a collection of comic songs and sketches .

In 1959 Terry @-@ Thomas published his first autobiography , *Filling the Gap* , named after his spot in *Large as Life* ; he explained that " everything that has been printed about me is lies . I 'm not suggesting the writers were lying , I was " . During the year he also appeared in two further instalments of the Boultings brothers ' series of institutional satires , having appeared in the previous three . The first , in which he was joined again by Sellers , was *Carlton @-@ Browne of the F.O.* , in which he played Cadogan de Vere Carlton @-@ Browne , a character he described as being " rubble from the nostrils up " , " a certain type of Englishman , the Englishman who reads *The Times* and no other newspaper . A brolly carrier . A squash player . A bowler hat wearer . White collar , stiff , of course " . Film writer Andrew Spicer thought that Terry @-@ Thomas 's role " was the quintessential upper @-@ class ' silly @-@ ass ' , a sad relic of a vanished world " . The film was initially chosen as Britain 's entry for the 1959 Moscow International Film Festival until the Foreign Office petitioned the British Film Producers ' Association for it to be withdrawn on the basis that the Russians might consider the film to accurately portray British diplomatic behaviour .

Terry @-@ Thomas 's final film with the Boulting brothers was *I 'm All Right Jack* , a post @-@ war follow @-@ up to *Private 's Progress* with Terry @-@ Thomas reprising the role of Major Hitchcock

to an industrial setting , as the " tetchily incompetent " personnel manager . Many of the other cast from Private 's Progress also returned , including Attenborough , Carmichael and Dennis Price ; they were joined by Peter Sellers , who took most of the plaudits from the critics , although Stanley Kauffman , writing in The New Republic also delighted in Terry @-@ Thomas 's " finesse " and " extraordinary skill " . The Los Angeles Times retrospectively considered I 'm All Right Jack and Carlton @-@ Browne of the F.O. to have been Terry @-@ Thomas 's best works . His final film of 1959 was as William Delany Gordon in Too Many Crooks . Bosley Crowther of The New York Times thought that Terry @-@ Thomas provided " some of the fieriest conniptions to be seen on the contemporary screen " , going on to say that the actor 's " skill is exercised in demonstrating how magnificently and completely a mad @-@ cap comedian can completely blow his top . His eyes flash , his lips curl , his sibilants whistle and he glares like a maniac " . Filming took place during the daytime ; in the evenings he appeared at the London Palladium , something he found trying on his nervous system .

In 1960 Terry @-@ Thomas appeared as Raymond Delauney in School for Scoundrels , a film his biographer , Robert Ross , called " the definitive screen presentation of his frightfully well @-@ mannered , well @-@ read and well @-@ educated lounge lizard : T @-@ T the man as T @-@ T the film star " . He again appeared opposite Ian Carmichael , and they were joined by Alastair Sim and Janette Scott . Michael Brooke , writing for the British Film Institute , thought Terry @-@ Thomas was " outstanding as a classic British bounder " . Later the same year he appeared in Make Mine Mink as Major Albert Rayne , a veteran of the Second World War who forms a gang of mink coat thieves with his female co @-@ lodgers . When he made an appearance at a screening of the film in Dalston , north @-@ east London , he was presented with a white mink waistcoat by a local furrier .

In 1961 Terry @-@ Thomas played Archibald Bannister in A Matter of WHO , which he described as " my first (fairly) serious role " . He was joined in the film by his second cousin Richard Briers , with Terry @-@ Thomas noting that he provided " no nepotic help " in getting Briers the part . The film was not well received by the critics ; an internal BBC memo described that in the UK the film was " murdered by the critics " , although it was " something of a success " in America . By this time Terry @-@ Thomas had decided to stop being a stand @-@ up comedian and compere and instead concentrate solely on making films . He stopped appearing on television and radio shows of his own , declaring " it was the cinema for me and me for the cinema ! " Having accumulated considerable experience by appearing in British films , he decided to try Hollywood , and moved to America .

== = Breaking into Hollywood : 1961 ? 65 = = =

Terry @-@ Thomas spent part of 1961 in America , filming the role of Professor Bruce Patterson in Bachelor Flat ? his first Hollywood role ? before flying to Gibraltar to film Operation Snatch , in which he teamed up with Lionel Jeffries . By the end of 1961 Terry @-@ Thomas was appearing on radio , in guest spots on American television shows , such as the December broadcast of The Bing Crosby Show , and was frequently the subject of US newspaper interviews . In 1962 Bachelor Flat and Operation Snatch were both released , and were followed by two more films : a large @-@ budget biopic from Metro @-@ Goldwyn @-@ Mayer called The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm , in which Terry @-@ Thomas shared his scenes with the American comedian Buddy Hackett , and Kill or Cure , in which he appeared with Eric Sykes , a friend since they worked together in Large as Life .

On 1 February 1962 Terry @-@ Thomas and Pat Patlanski divorced , having spent the previous eight years estranged . He had by then split from his mistress of the previous few years , Lorrae Desmond , who returned to Australia shortly afterwards and married a surgeon ; Terry @-@ Thomas resumed his bachelor life @-@ style . The break @-@ up with Desmond caused him great upset , and he sought solace with Belinda Cunningham , a 21 @-@ year @-@ old whom he had met on holiday in Majorca two years previously . The couple began a romance , and married in August 1963 at Halstead Registry Office in Colchester , Essex . The following year she gave birth to their first son ? Timothy Hoar ? at the Princess Beatrice Hospital in London .

In 1963 Terry @-@ Thomas was offered the role of Lt @-@ Colonel J. Algernon Hawthorne in It 's a Mad , Mad , Mad , Mad World , and turned down the opportunity before leaving for the UK . By the time his flight arrived in London he had changed his mind , so he telephoned producer Stanley Kramer from the airport to signal his acceptance , and " popped back on a plane to be fitted for the part " the same day . He was not comfortable with many of the other actors on set , later commenting that " I was the only non @-@ American , and I found it exhausting and embarrassing because they never relaxed . They were always ' on ' . " One of the American stars was Spencer Tracy , whom Terry @-@ Thomas considered " an extra @-@ special man " ; Tracy and Buster Keaton ? who also appeared in the film ? were described by Terry @-@ Thomas as " the only two people who ever produced in me this awe of greatness " .

Later in 1963 he picked up his second film nomination , the Golden Globe for Best Comedy Actor for his portrayal of Spender in The Mouse on the Moon . He also tried his hand at production , with three 15 @-@ minute travelogues : Terry @-@ Thomas in Tuscany , Terry @-@ Thomas in the South of France and Terry @-@ Thomas in Northern Ireland . He did not enjoy the producer 's role , complaining that " for some extraordinary reason that I could never understand , everybody was always out to do the producer of any film whoever he was . I had to be on the watch the whole time " . He worked consistently during 1963 , appearing in television programmes on both sides of the Atlantic ; these included Terry @-@ Thomas , a one @-@ off variety show on BBC television in July that included Donald Sutherland .

In 1964 Terry @-@ Thomas started filming the role of Charles Furbank in How to Murder Your Wife , a part which brought him £ 100 @,@ 000 , his largest fee up to that point . He said that it was his favourite to make , " because I felt that I did a very good job " . He enjoyed working with Jack Lemmon , the film 's star , partly because Lemmon would play jazz and sing while the scenes were being lit : the two became friends and Terry @-@ Thomas was invited to Lemmon 's wedding . Throughout the rest of the year Terry @-@ Thomas continued to appear on US television , again in Burke 's Law , but also on What 's My Line ? and An Hour with Robert Goulet , both on CBS ; he also released another record , Terry @-@ Thomas Discovers America , a collection of songs and sketches , described by Billboard as " a funny , funny comedy masterpiece " . His earlier record Strictly T @-@ T was also released in the US .

Alongside How to Murder Your Wife , there were two further releases for Terry @-@ Thomas in 1965 : Strange Bedfellows , in which he played the part of a mortician , and Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines . In the latter , he played Sir Percy Ware @-@ Armitage , a character the film historian Andrew Spicer calls " a cartoon version " of his usual persona in a " bloated mid @-@ Atlantic comed [y] " . In the film , Terry @-@ Thomas appeared again with Eric Sykes , an experience Sykes later described as magical . The roles of Ware @-@ Armitage and his sidekick were written especially for Terry @-@ Thomas and Sykes at the behest of the director Ken Annakin .

= = = European cinema : 1966 ? 70 = = =

By the mid @-@ 1960s Terry @-@ Thomas was tiring of the Hollywood lifestyle , and , during the latter half of the 1960s , he worked with European filmmakers , returning occasionally to the US when he was filming there . In one of his French @-@ produced films , La Grande Vadrouille , he played Sir Reginald , a stranded Royal Air Force pilot travelling through occupied France with characters played by Bourvil and Louis de Funès . The film , released in 1966 , held the record for highest box @-@ office takings in France until 2004 , and it remains " one of the most popular films with television audiences in France " . Terry @-@ Thomas undertook a number of roles with the Italian cinema industry . For one of the Italian @-@ produced films , the 1967 farce Arabella , he played four parts and used " the help of wigs , moustaches and lashings of Max Factor " to help achieve the different characterisations , which were all with the Italian actress Virna Lisi .

Although the European films allowed him to travel and gave him a constant source of income , he received bigger fees from his less @-@ frequent engagements in US films , which he continued to appear in , joking that he " knew the fat cheques in the pipe @-@ line were endless " . One of the

bigger fees came with Gene Kelly 's 1967 film *A Guide for the Married Man* ; he was disappointed by Kelly 's direction , later saying " I found him a very prudish director , not as imaginative or experimental as I would have liked " . Terry @-@ Thomas had more time for the actress with whom he shared his short scene , Jayne Mansfield , commenting that " I found her rather intelligent to talk to and felt quite shattered when I read about the gruesome car accident that killed her " . An actress he had difficulties in working with was Doris Day : in the 1968 film *Where Were You When the Lights Went Out ?* , which was produced by her husband Martin Melcher . Day would instruct Terry @-@ Thomas how he should act in a scene (he would " listen ... politely , then do it my own way , as if the conversation had never taken place ") . She would also launch into improvisations while filming ; director Hy Averback would mimic a scissor action behind her back to signal to Terry @-@ Thomas that the material would be duly cut from the final print . The result was a film that Geoff Mayer called " limp " , and Christopher Young described as " such an uneven movie that misses so many opportunities for real comedy " .

In 1967 Terry @-@ Thomas met his long @-@ time friend Denholm Elliott in *Bel Air* and the pair talked about Elliott 's new villa in Santa Eulària des Riu on the Spanish island of Ibiza . Terry @-@ Thomas was intrigued by the possibility of a Mediterranean retreat and visited the island on the way to film *Monte Carlo : C'est La Rose* with Princess Grace of Monaco who was playing herself . Although he initially struggled to find the right plot of ground for the right price , he eventually settled on an appropriate location ; declaring he was " allergic to architects " , he designed the house himself . His former wife Pat moved to the nearby island of Majorca , and Terry @-@ Thomas 's relationship with her became warm and friendly ; Patlanski also had a firm friendship with Terry @-@ Thomas 's wife .

In between films Terry @-@ Thomas appeared on television on both sides of the Atlantic . In the US in March ? April 1967 he was in " *The Five Daughters Affair* " , a two @-@ part story in the TV series *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* , and on 22 May he appeared on *The Red Skelton Hour* . On British television , in an episode of the *Comedy Playhouse* called " *The Old Campaigner* " , he played James Franklin @-@ Jones , a salesman for a plastics company who was continually searching for love affairs while travelling on business . This character was " yet another variation on his rakish cad persona " , according to Mark Lewisohn . The episode was well @-@ received , and a six @-@ part series was commissioned that ran over December 1968 and January 1969 . Although the series performed well in the ratings , a second series was not commissioned . In between the pilot and the series of *The Old Campaigner* , in April 1968 , Terry @-@ Thomas appeared on the British ITV network in a one @-@ off variety special , *The Big Show* , which combined musical numbers and his urbane monologues . Robert Ross commented that Terry @-@ Thomas " seemed to delight in resurrecting his vintage sophisticated patter after years in movies ... the top raconteur was back where he belonged " . In 1969 he again teamed up with Eric Sykes and director Ken Annakin for a joint Italian , French and British production *Monte Carlo or Bust !* . The film was " the only copper @-@ bottomed sequel to ... *Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines* " , according to Richard Ross . Terry @-@ Thomas played Sir Cuthbert Ware @-@ Armitage , the " thoroughly bad egg son of flying ace Sir Percy Ware @-@ Armitage " , his role in *Those Magnificent Men* . Terry @-@ Thomas secured four other roles in minor films that year , including *Arthur ? Arthur !* (which he joked had " never been shown anywhere ? as far as I know ! ") , as well as on television in the UK , US and Australia .

The 1970s began well for Terry @-@ Thomas ; television appearances in the UK and US were augmented by filming for *The Abominable Dr. Phibes* , which became what author Bruce Hallenbeck called a " camp classic " , despite being described by *Time Out* critic David Pirie , as " the worst horror film made in England since 1945 " ; the film was released in 1971 . On 1 August 1970 Terry @-@ Thomas made his second appearance on *Desert Island Discs* ; his luxury item was a case of brandy , chosen because it lasted longer than champagne .

== Dealing with Parkinson 's : 1971 ? 83 ==

While appearing in *Don't Just Lie There , Say Something !* at the Metro Theatre , Sydney in 1971 ,

Terry @-@ Thomas felt unwell and visited a doctor , who noticed his patient 's left hand was shaking slightly ; the doctor suggested a visit , upon his return to the UK , to a specialist , who diagnosed the actor with Parkinson 's disease . Fearing the condition would affect offers of work , he did not make the news public , but as the symptoms began to manifest themselves in tremors , a shuffling gait , stooped posture and affected speech , he made the news known ? partly to stop rumours of on @-@ set drunkenness .

He continued to work as much as possible , although ? as the film historian Geoff Mayer pointed out ? the situation " reduced his film career to supporting roles and cameos " . The lucrative voice @-@ over role of Sir Hiss in the 1973 Walt Disney film Robin Hood was one notable part , while others were less well @-@ known , such as The Vault of Horror , a film described by Richard Ross as a " cornball terror " , in which he starred with Curd Jürgens , Tom Baker and Denholm Elliott . He also continued to appear on television shows in both the US and UK , as well as advertisements , including appearing with June Whitfield for Birds Eye fish fingers ; a series of vermouth advertisements filmed in Italy ; and an award @-@ winning series for Benson & Hedges along with Eric Sykes .

During the 1970s he starred in a series of low @-@ budget British films , including two in 1975 , Spanish Fly ? called a " gruesome smutfest " by the writer Christopher Fowler ? and The Bawdy Adventures of Tom Jones , described by the Film Review Digest as a " cheap , crude , sexed @-@ up rehash " of the other film adaptations of Henry Fielding 's source novel .

In 1977 he starred in The Last Remake of Beau Geste and The Hound of the Baskervilles , the latter starring Peter Cook and Dudley Moore as Holmes and Watson ; Terry @-@ Thomas thought that " it was the most outrageous film I ever appeared in ... there was no magic ... it was bad ! " By then he had exhibited a decrease in bodily movement , a sign of how serious his condition had become . His distinctive voice had developed a softer tone and his posture was contorted . Between 1978 and 1980 , he spent much time with medical consultants . Despite this he was offered a few engagements and had been voted the most recognisable Englishman among Americans in a poll which also featured Laurence Olivier , Robert Morley and Wilfrid Hyde @-@ White . As a result , he secured a lucrative advertising contract with the Ford Motor Company . Derek Jarman offered Terry @-@ Thomas a role in his 1979 film The Tempest , but the actor was forced to pull out because of his deteriorating health .

Terry @-@ Thomas undertook his final film role in 1980 in Febbre a 40 ! , a German and Italian co @-@ production that was " nondescript and barely screened " , according to Robert Ross , and did not even have a theatrical release in its two domestic markets . He continued his involvement in the film industry , where he funded three films during the early 1980s (noted by Ross to be " destined from the outset for B @-@ picture status or straight @-@ to @-@ video exposure ") ; he commented that " I have made a loss of one hundred per cent " . In 1982 , with his condition worsening , Terry @-@ Thomas featured in two episodes of the BBC series The Human Brain , which examined his condition ; his frank interview brought much public awareness of the disease and raised £ 32 @,@ 000 for the Parkinson 's Disease Society . Privately , he was becoming more depressed ; his London flat had been sold to provide badly @-@ needed funds , and his work offers were decreasing .

= = = Final years and death : 1983 ? 90 = = =

By 1983 , with his medical bills at £ 40 @,@ 000 a year , Terry @-@ Thomas 's financial resources were dwindling . He and his wife sold their dream house and moved into the small cottage once owned by his former wife Pat Patlanski , which she left to him in her will on her death in June that year . Shortly afterwards he worked with ghostwriter Terry Daum on an autobiography , Terry @-@ Thomas Tells Tales . Although the first draft was completed by late summer 1984 , Terry @-@ Thomas refused to release the script and continued to make alterations , but never completed his copyediting : the book was finally published after his death .

By 1984 Terry @-@ Thomas was increasingly depressed by his condition and when he was interviewed that year , he admitted that " one doctor said I 've got about four more years to live . God

forbid ! I shall probably blow my brains out first " . In 1987 the couple could no longer afford to live in Spain , so they moved back to London . They lived in a series of rented properties before ending up in a three @-@ room , unfurnished charity flat , where they lived with financial assistance from the Actors ' Benevolent Fund . Richard Briers was one of his first visitors at the flat , and was shocked by the change he saw : " [S] itting there , motionless , he was just a mere shadow . A crippled , crushed , shadow . It was really bloody awful . "

On 9 April 1989 the actor Jack Douglas and Richard Hope @-@ Hawkins organised a benefit concert for Terry @-@ Thomas , after discovering he was living in virtual obscurity , poverty and ill health . The gala , held at the Theatre Royal , Drury Lane , ran for five hours , and featured 120 artists with Phil Collins topping the bill and Michael Caine as the gala chairman . The show raised over £ 75 @,@ 000 for Terry @-@ Thomas and Parkinson 's UK . The funds from the charity concert allowed Terry @-@ Thomas to move out of his charity flat and into Busbridge Hall nursing home in Godalming , Surrey . He died there on 8 January 1990 , at the age of 78 . The funeral service was held at St. John the Baptist Church , Busbridge , where the theme from Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines was played ; he was cremated at Guildford Crematorium .

= = Screen persona and technique = =

Although there were exceptions , Terry @-@ Thomas 's screen characters were generally similar ; Geoff Mayer wrote that " although there would be variations , he would remain the ' rotter ' , a pretentious , elitist , seedy , sometimes lecherous cad with an eye for quick money and the easy life " . Eric Sykes , with whom Terry @-@ Thomas shared a number of screen moments , stated that it was " always the same character and always funny " . Andrew Spicer , writing for the British Film Institute , called him " the definitive postwar cad or rotter " . Terry @-@ Thomas himself agreed with the view he presented , writing in the 1980s that " T @-@ T with his permanent air of caddish disdain ... bounder ... aristocratic rogue ... upper @-@ class English twit ... genuine English eccentric ... one of the last real gentlemen ... wet , genteel Englishman ... high @-@ bred idiot ... cheeky blighter ... camel @-@ haired cad ... amiable buffoon ... pompous Englishman ... twentieth @-@ century dandy ... stinker ... king of the cads ... All those descriptions added up to my image as Terry @-@ Thomas " .

Terry @-@ Thomas identified himself as a comedy actor , but regarded himself " first and foremost , as a comedian with a built @-@ in ability to inject humour into situations " . He worked hard at the humour element , especially during his days in cabaret and revue ; he wrote that he " spent an enormous amount of time studying how to write humour and reading books on the philosophical approach to it , but it didn 't get me very far . I decided that humour was like a good watch . It would go well if left to do its job but the moment one started poking around , it went wonky " . While working on his television series How do you View ? , he would change lines around to ensure the scene worked well , even if he gave the best lines to others ; it was a quality which was appreciated by a number of others , including Jack Lemmon , who appeared with Terry @-@ Thomas in How to Murder Your Wife . Lemmon commented that " like most really good professionals he was generous to fellow actors . He worked with you , not at you " .

Before starting filming or making an entrance on stage , Terry @-@ Thomas had a routine he would undertake : " my own technique to get myself going was ... to jump in the air and execute a few dance steps " . His approach for much of his film work was to underplay many of his reactions . Filming a scene in a cinema in Private 's Progress , a close @-@ up was needed showing his character " registering shock , fury , indignation and anything else I could stuff in " ; he " just looked into the camera and kept my mind blank . It 's a trick I 've used often since . In this way , the audience does the work " . Terry @-@ Thomas said " I like to do my own stunts " , which he did for films such as A Matter of WHO and Bachelor Flat . This included some dangerous work ; for example , during Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines , he ran along the roof of a moving train .

= = Legacy and reputation = =

Following Terry @-@ Thomas 's death , Lionel Jeffries called him " the last of the great gentlemen of the cinema " , while the director Michael Winner commented that " no matter what your position was in relation to his , as the star he was always terribly nice . He was the kindest man and he enjoyed life so much " . Reviewing his career in The Guardian , Adrian Turner considered that " we took him for granted and he was ideal for his time . Not to put too serious a point on it , his portrayal of crass stupidity and blatant deviousness struck a chord with British audiences during the fifties as they experienced the clumsy dismemberment of the Empire and the ' never had it so good ' ethos of the Macmillan era . During the sixties he became a glorious anachronism , much in demand in America , who saw in him the irrelevant pageantry of Britain " ; he also said that Terry @-@ Thomas was " a national treasure " . Gilbert Adair , writing in The Independent , considered that " for three decades , and in literally scores of films , he personified the Englishman as amiable bounder " ; Adair wrote that " the characterisation he was to assume represented the very essence of patrician , double @-@ barrelled caddishness " . Terry @-@ Thomas 's friend Jack Lemmon called him " a consummate professional ... he was a gentleman , a delight to be with personally , let alone professionally , and above all as an actor he had one of the qualities that I admire so much ? he made it look simple " .

Terry @-@ Thomas 's image of an English cad was used by others . The personification started in the 1960s when the voice actor Ivan Owen , who had worked alongside Terry @-@ Thomas in " Stars in Battledress " , based the voice for Basil Brush on that of Terry @-@ Thomas , in a characterisation which also copied Terry @-@ Thomas 's " penchant for bad , self @-@ satisfied , golf @-@ club @-@ bore jokes " . The 1960s also witnessed the fictional cartoon character Dick Dastardly in two Hanna @-@ Barbera cartoon series (Wacky Races and Dastardly and Muttley in Their Flying Machines) , who was inspired by Terry @-@ Thomas .

Other actors have also used Terry @-@ Thomas 's persona as an inspiration for their characters : Dustin Hoffman acknowledged that he based his interpretation of the character Captain Hook in Hook on Terry @-@ Thomas ; Rupert Everett disclosed that when he provided the voice for Prince Charming in Shrek 2 Terry @-@ Thomas " was vocally my role model while I was doing it " ; and Paul Whitehouse 's character , the 13th Duke of Wybourne , from The Fast Show was also modelled on Terry @-@ Thomas 's on @-@ screen persona .

Terry @-@ Thomas 's popularity continued after his death . In February 1999 the National Film Theatre ran a season of Terry @-@ Thomas films ; an NFT spokesman described how attendees to the films turned up " in evening dress , with false moustaches and carrying cigarettes in long holders ... everyone has been trying to steal the cardboard cutouts of Terry ... We 've never had a response like it . To be honest , we are rather unprepared . Nobody expected Terry @-@ Thomas Fever " .

Some of the innovations Terry @-@ Thomas brought into his earlier television programmes were later copied by others ; How Do You View ? later provided the " prologue " format of Up Pompeii ! , and was the first to use regular BBC announcers as foils in comic sketches ? a practice continued later , particularly with the shows of Morecambe and Wise . Terry @-@ Thomas 's anecdotes , stringing several stories together , later inspired Ronnie Corbett in his monologue spot in his series The Two Ronnies .

= = Filmography and other works = =