

ACT ONE

Scene is set with a ladder, paint pot and brush, apron and duster and 'Home Sweet Home' sign either in front of stage or at far side. To keep things simple, the backdrop could be a collage of the different locations, with perhaps a signpost indicating River/Wild Wood/Toad Hall etc. Minimal props can then be used as necessary to denote the individual locations. Various members of cast are gathered in groups; they mime chatting etc. Toad, Mole and Badger are together, at the front.)

STRUCTURE

CD Track 1

SCENE 1: Riverside

SCENE 1 FRIENDS TOGETHER (INTRO) *(see Music Book, p66 for lyrics)*

CD Track 2

After song, begin to drift off in groups, except a few stoats and weasels, who hang around looking furtive. Toad, Ratty, Mole and Badger move to front of stage.)

Toad Well, well, we did have an adventure, didn't we chaps?

Ratty We certainly did, Toad old boy, we certainly did.

Badger I rather wish we could do it all again!

Mole My dear, young Mole, I think one adventure of that sort is enough for anybody's lifetime!

Ratty Ah, wise Badger! I'm sure you're right, as usual. But it was great fun!

Toad It was! And I can't think of three nicer chums to share such fun with! Dear Ratty, wise old Badger and sensible Mole. A chap couldn't ask for better friends!

Ratty I remember so clearly the day when it all began... Mole... you were I believe deep, deep down in the ground in your dear little home, cleaning it ready for spring. *(Mole goes off to ladder and duster)* And Badger, you were safely tucked away over in the worryingly Wild Wood...

(Tapping noses) Where the stoats and weasels get up to no good!

Toad *(Moving forward)* Given half a chance! *(Snigger)*

Badger Away with you now! Shoo, shoo!

(Toad, Ratty and Mole exit.)

Badger ...always ready to give a warm welcome!

Badger *(As he exits)* Why, thank you, Ratty dear boy.

Badger *(Arm round Toad's shoulder – move to front centre stage)* And Toad... well, what can I say? Mr Toad, living a life of luxury in...

...Toad Hall, the finest house on the Riverbank!

Badger Absolutely! Even though you say so yourself!

(At that time, dreaming of meeting with...)

(Enter Narrator. He should have script concealed within a large copy of 'Wind in the Willows'. Mole begins cleaning.)

Narr I say, shall I help you along as our tale gets underway? I can fill in some gaps so it's not too long a play! Okay. The adventure began with our four friends in their beloved homes, safe and sound. Madly polishing and dusting, Mole worked underground. But in the air above and in the earth below, spring was moving –

(Woodland Creatures enter, quietly giggling and chasing.)

Mole *(Coughing with dust)* Bother! O blow!

Narr So when the wind in the willows whispered his name, Mole couldn't resist ...

Mole Hang spring-cleaning! *(Throws down duster etc)*

Narr , ... and up he came – with a scrabble and a scrooge and an...

Mole Up we go! *(Mole mimes scrambling upwards, rolls onto stage)*

Narr ... till he found himself rolling in a warm, great meadow.

(Woodland Creatures do an appropriate movement eg: lambs gambol; frogs leap; rabbits hop; rats roll, whilst calling out the relevant word. Mole joins in with them, thoroughly enjoying himself, until he suddenly freezes, transfixed by something. All then freeze, staring in the direction of the river, which will vary according to the lay out of the stage. River People enter and move across a defined area, which will be the 'river space' for the next scene.)

Narr Mole had thought his happiness complete until he saw... a full-fed river. Never before had he seen a river. Such an awesome sight! Now he gazed, entranced, at this sleek, powerful, twisting animal, which sparkled in the morning light.

(Enter River People, dressed in silvers and blues, perhaps with 'cloaks' of water-like fabric. They move slowly, rhythmically across stage, depending on available area. The following dialogue should be 'shared out', as it would be difficult to speak in unison.)

River Sleek and twisting; chasing, chuckling; gurgling, glints and gleams;
A-shake and a-shiver, meanders the river through your hopes and dreams.
Chatter and bubble; through laughter and trouble; faithful, foaming friend.
Sparkle and swirl to who knows where, as the seasons come and the seasons go
And you watch my everlasting flow, round bend after chuckling bend.
The willows bow to my majesty, dipping tips to sip of my foam.
And they whisper tales of the rats and voles who call this river home.

(As River exits, Ratty enters, followed by Ducks who move into 'river space', downstage of Ratty and Mole, miming swimming in various formations. Woodland Creatures could exit or remain in background if wanted for next song. Mole still stands entranced.)

Ratty *(Trying to break him out of trance)* Hello Mole!

Mole *(Suddenly back to earth)* Hello Rat.

Ratty I say, how would you like to come over and join me for a picnic?

Mole *(Gesturing to the 'water')* Well, that's easy for you to say!

Ratty Aha! *(He fetches a boat and rows it across to Mole)* Now then step lively!

Jeeves You know what he's like! He won't give in easily. He's far too used to getting his own way. Anyway, we'd better hurry if we're going to catch that bus into town and get more supplies. *(More wailing)* Better add a few more boxes of tissues to the list!

(During the following narration, a knotted sheet appears from side of stage. Toad 'climbs' down it on hands and knees.)

Narr Toad's friends had determined to keep Toad safely under lock and key until the spell which motor-cars had cast over him was broken. We'll see!

Toad I'm not a prisoner, I'm a clever toad! *(Runs off)*

Narr Uh oh! Devious Toad is off down the road, whistling a merry tune. Alas, poor Toad! He's not free, for he's still bound to the dreaded motor-car, which could prove his downfall all too soon!

(2-D car enters across stage driven by Rupert and Monica. From side of stage pub notice appears 'The Red Lion'. Car is 'parked' and R&M enter pub.)

Rupert G & T for you, darling?

Monica Just a little one though – I don't want to get squiffy!

(Toad appears, sees car, becomes ecstatic, looks around furtively, gets in and steals car. Drives off shouting 'Poop-poop!' If there is room, he could drive around the audience before crashing.)

Narr Once at the wheel, Toad knew only that he was Toad once more. Toad at his best and highest. Toad the Terror, lord of the lone trail!

Rupert *(Running out of pub)* I say, he's stolen my car! Stop thief!

SFX Car crash
(Rupert reacts. Enter policeman dragging a dishevelled Toad.)

CD2 Track 20

Pol 'Allo, 'allo, 'allo! What 'ave we 'ere?

Toad Unhand me you ruffian! Don't you know who I am, you nincompoop!

Pol I don't care who you are. But I know where you're going – jail!

SCENE CHANGE MUSIC

CD2 Track 17

SCENE 9: Court

(Set Court scene. Jury members come bustling in, chattering amongst themselves. Clerk and other magistrates enter. Toad is brought on handcuffed.)

Clerk *(Tapping his gavel on bench)* Order! Order! Silence! Please be upstanding for his honour the Chairman of the Bench of Magistrates! *(Enter Chairman)*

Song 7 TWENTY YEARS *(see Music Book, p72 for lyrics)*

CD Track 8

INTERVAL

ACT TWO

ENTR'ACTE

CD Track 9

SCENE 1: Jail

(Toad is in jail. There are two other prisoners in an adjoining cell. To help with sightlines, they could be seated on wooden benches rather than the floor.)

Toad This is the end of everything! At least it is the end of the career of Toad which is the same thing. The popular and handsome Toad, the rich and hospitable Toad, the Toad so free and careless and debonair! How can I hope to ever be set at large again!

Pris 1 Would you Adam and Eve it? He's orf again! Why don't you give your poor teeth a rest?

Pris 2 Yeah – and our ears!

Pris 1 Didn't feel like we was doin' 'ard time till you got 'ere!

Toad I am a toad accustomed to giving inspirational speeches! Oh! Never again will I entertain all my friends with my wit and wisdom!

Sally There, there Mr Toad, don't go on so. It's not the end of the world! Look what I've brought for you!

Song 8 CHEER UP TOAD! *(see Music Book, p74 for lyrics)*

CD Track 10

(During instrumental verse:)

Pris 1 'Ere Sally – you should have made 'im Toad in the 'ole!

Pris 2 No! Babble and squeak!

Sally Hush you two, can't you see he's upset?

Pris 1 Oh there, there Mr Toad! Have a nice cuppa char!

Pris 2 *(Holding up little finger)* Don't forget your 'pinkie'.

Sally Come on, Mr Toad, give us a smile – you know you want to! Haven't you got a nice smile for Sally? Oh, what am I gonna do with you?!

Sally I know what might really cheer you up. I think I may know how you could escape. My aunt is the washerwoman here at the prison. If you could see your way clear to giving her a few bob, I'm sure she'd let you borrow her dress and bonnet and so on, and then you could leave the prison suitably disguised!

Toad Surely you wouldn't have Toad of Toad Hall go about the country dressed as a washerwoman?!

Sally Then you can stop here as a toad! I suppose you want to go off in a horse-driven coach!

Toad *(Repentant)* You are a good, kind, clever girl and I am a proud and stupid toad. Introduce me to your worthy aunt and I have no doubt we will be able to come to some satisfactory arrangement.

(During the following narration, Sally dresses Toad as washerwoman.)

Narr And so the great escape was planned, a certain sum of money changing hands. A dress and shawl and bonnet were duly bestowed. Well, there's a washerwoman, wherever is Mr Toad?