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5th January 1985

# WOMAN'S WEEKLY

Britain's Best-Selling  
Women's Magazine

**THE HILLS  
OF HOME**  
ENCHANTING NEW SERIAL  
SET IN WALES

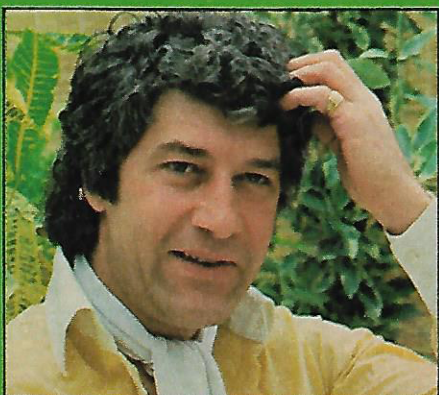
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'Life is so  
funny—  
there are a  
lot of laughs.'  
says actor  
**GARETH  
HUNT**



**BARGAIN  
VALUE**

**Self-Catering Holidays**  
IN THE SUNNY SOUTH OF FRANCE

**Vegetable Variety Show**  
GORGEOUS NEW RECIPES



Gareth Hunt, ex-special agent, now pantomime 'baddie', tells Ian Woodward he wants the rôles he plays to be as diverse as possible

# Out of Town

**G**ARETH HUNT is a happy man. He is no longer living with ghosts from the past. The former Cockney coal-merchant's son from Battersea can breeze through 1985 safe in the knowledge that a new era is about to open up in what has already been a far from unexciting life.

Having made an immediate impact on the ladies as Frederick the footman in London Weekend Television's international blockbuster, *Upstairs, Downstairs*, followed by his portrayal as tough-guy special agent Mike Gambit in TV's *The New Avengers*, Gareth found it impossible to shake off their mantle. Producers were even worse than an enthusiastic public in pigeon-holing him in the mould of a beefcake hero.

And then there were films like *The World is Full of Married Men*, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*, *The House on Garibaldi Street* and *Licensed to Love and Kill*. The image established in the TV series was now, in the movies, transforming him into a screen sex object—though he personally never looked on himself as that.

Nonetheless, he became a male pin-up.

But perhaps the most poignant ghost of all was that of rock star Keith Moon who lived with Swedish model Annette Walter-Lax for three years, until he died in her arms in 1978. Gareth married Annette in 1980, and together they have fought to overcome her traumatic experience. Quietly and with considerable dignity, they have surmounted that sorrow.

Four and a half years ago their son Oliver was born. "I think that was a terrific release for Annette," says Gareth, who has a sixteen-year-old son, Gareth Junior, from his first marriage.

Two factors seem to have affirmed the new direction of the new Gareth Hunt. Firstly, when fans see him in the street they forget about Gambit and exclaim instead, "How's your beans?—ha, ha", with reference to his popular TV coffee commercials.

And, secondly, he has recently opened in Bournemouth, at the Pavilion Theatre, as "a baddie Baron character" in *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*.

"I've always been drawn towards the lighter side of life. I'd love to do a series like *The Rockford Files*. I love that tongue-in-cheek comedy which the Americans are so good at.

"This is why I'm so excited about doing pantomime in Bournemouth with Ted Rogers and Lynsey de Paul—in fact, I did my first-ever pantomime last year, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, with Cilla Black. I played a wonderful baddie called Fleshcreep. It was a totally new experience for me, because we did two shows a day, six days a week.

"A lot of people look at me in amazement when I tell them that I'm playing an 'Oh no I didn't . . . Oh yes you did!' character in *Goldilocks*. They seem to think that it's all rather odd for a so-called 'serious' actor like me, who has worked with the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company.

"That makes me laugh . . . no, it doesn't, it makes me cross! I mean, the tag 'serious actor' or 'comedy actor' is something that's been imposed on someone by other people, the media in particular. Actors themselves certainly never think in these terms.

"Before I agreed to do *Goldilocks* I was appearing in Bournemouth in a thriller play which I'd already done in the West End, Ira Levin's *Deathtrap*. I enjoyed that immensely, but I like to ring the changes—and, besides, I'm trying hard to make it possible for people to see me in a completely different context, well away from my old image as a gun-toting, punch-throwing tough guy."

Constantly by his side is his wife Annette. He refers to her as "my mentor, guide and trusted friend" and as "the most marvellous woman in the world".



## WOMAN'S WEEKLY

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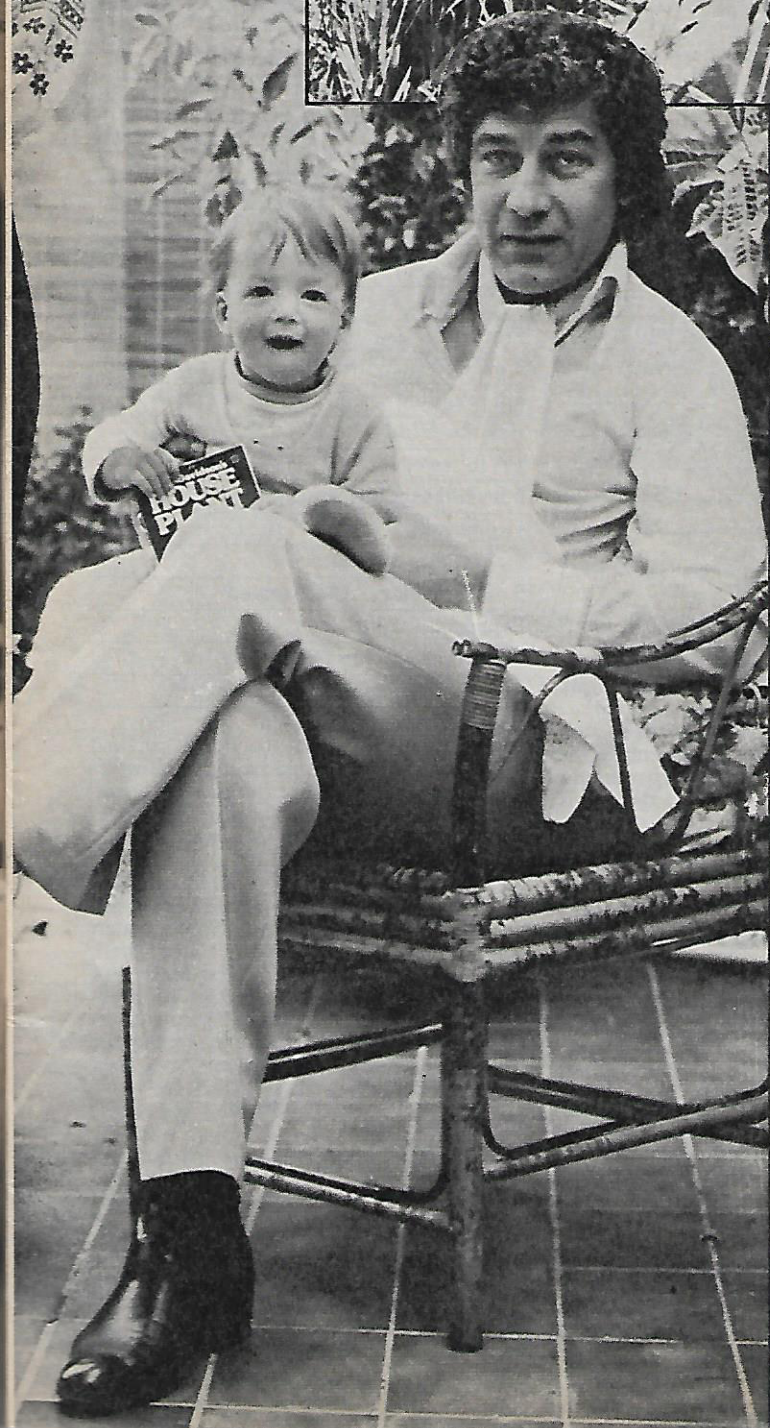
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Far left: Gareth first came to public prominence in the role of Gambit in *The New Avengers* which co-starred the lovely Joanna Lumley.

Below: With his model wife Annette and their son Oliver, now a mischievous four and a half.

Right: Out fishing with Gareth Junior, his teenage son from his first marriage.



"She understands an actor's life, and that is the main thing," he says simply.

Gareth talks with compassion of the early years in their relationship. He recalls how Annette kept to herself most of what happened between her and Keith Moon, and how he just let her tell him what she wanted to and no more.

"It wasn't easy," he says. "Even now it can be difficult. But we're very happy, very close . . ."

There has always been a sensitive side to the all-action Gareth Hunt, who karate-chopped opponents into oblivion as Gambit of *The New Avengers*. He is a man who cries at sad films, feels sorry for old people who can't manage their lives properly any more, and who sobs if animals get hurt. He is quieter than his public veneer might otherwise suggest, and certainly not the girl-chaser that his public persona has sometimes implied.

Before he became a professional actor, at the age of twenty-six, he served for six years in the Merchant Navy.

Soon after he came out of the Merchant Navy, his first marriage to a hairdresser took place. "I was too young, I realise that now," he reflects. His son from that marriage, Gareth junior, visits him most weekends.

He explains that he was "bowled over" when Annette presented him with his second son, Oliver, who weighed-in at 6lb. 10oz.

"It was certainly one of the most incredible things that has happened to me," he affirms. "Being there at the birth was the highlight of my life. I just felt so privileged, and

so very humble."

He adds: "Oliver's got to the point where, when I'm away at the theatre, he is saying: 'Where's Daddy? The car's not back.' I think if, while doing pantomime, I couldn't get back home at weekends to see him, I'd get quite depressed.

"I might be doing a major film in the New Year, and that will mean being out of the country for four or five weeks. I've got mixed feelings about it, because I know I'll miss him terribly—and Annette, of course."

It is to Annette, in fact, that Gareth is turning more and more these days when it comes to the direction in which his career is going.

He says, "Annette thinks I ought to go to America. She's always telling me that I'm not using my full potential."

It must be a big temptation for him to go there? "It is, though I've been there once before. I'll know when the time is right, and then I'll say, 'OK. let's go.'"

"You can't go there for two weeks and expect it to happen for you. You have to go there for six months to a year."

Annette, he explains, is not just his best and fairest critic. She is also greatly attuned to the "Hollywood situation" from her own personal experience in Tinseltown.

"Remember," he affirms, "that Annette used to live out there. The guy who produced *Charlie's Angels* used to live just down the road from her and based one of the characters in the series on Annette. She *knows* the Jack Nicholsons. She *knows* the Larry Hagmans. She used to live next door to Steve McQueen. So she's not easily impressed."

So what influence does she have on Gareth's life, on his decision-making? "Well," he says, "we talk about most things—but she always leaves the final decision to me."

"Of course," he laughs, "I should be in America according to her! She thinks I am a more 'American' actor than I am an English one. Well, maybe I look *too* American to be a success in the States, I don't know."

He has not always lived on the sunny side of the street. He likes to tell the story of how he was born on the wrong side of the river—that is, on the Battersea, south side of the Thames, the "poor" side.

"Where I was born doesn't exist any more," he laments. "It's all gone, all knocked down and replaced by these blocks of flats. I remember as a boy going from Battersea to Chelsea, and, culturally and socially, it was like going from China to England, the way it was all so different on the other side of the river."

"My family," says Gareth, "is a great concoction. There are bits and pieces: Welsh in the family, Irish, oh, all sorts. A bit of a melting pot, that's what I am."

To prove a point, he slips back into the Cockney accent of his childhood. "I was as Cockney as they come, sunshine!"

"If you listen carefully, the Cockney vowels are still there," he explains, reverting to his more customary, albeit acquired, voice.

"We had a family coal business," he then tells me, "but my father was killed in the war, along with his brother. I might have been a coalman, who knows?"

"I remember going to school on a horse and cart with my grandad,

*Continued overleaf*



## OUT OF TOWN

*Continued*

and I'll always remember how clean it was. We were selling coal, but he was always immaculate, with his trousers tied up with string, his cap, and a white scarf around his neck. They used to show the horses and the carts, and we had ours all polished up for the parade; beautiful, it was."

A reflective smile. "I was rather like Oliver, my son. I was an incredibly curious child; I've always been curious. I used to act out a lot of things in my mind, and I think that's what Oliver does."

"I remember that music was a great influence. I had one of those wind-up gramophones which fascinated me. My stepfather told me never to touch the gramophone, that there were little men playing all the instruments in there; and I remember the day when I was totally shattered to discover that there was nobody inside."

"I believed in Father Christmas for ages. I was always very naive, I always believed utterly in the sincerity of people. I worshipped that icon of goodness, Roy Rogers. I was a member of his fan club and I remember losing my members' badge in the garden and being totally depressed about it."

At fifteen Gareth went straight into the Merchant Navy. He says now: "I wanted to travel, I wanted to get away. There was more to life, I felt, than where I was living."

"My six years in the navy taught me a lot about survival, how to look after myself. It taught me when to open my mouth and when not to. And it gave me a certain amount of knowledge about how people in other countries live."

After the navy he went through a whole catalogue of jobs. He has been a butcher, baker, door-to-door salesman, electrical repair man, docker, screw-in of car clutches on a production line—even a mattress stuffer.

About this seemingly endless period of wandering he says, "I was looking around. I was searching around for what I should be doing with my life."

"But there's always been an actor in me. Every single job I did, I always acted out that part. I could always see the funny, larger-than-life side of it. I would always call upon my humour to get me out of certain tricky situations."

And then one day he woke up and decided he was going to be an actor and enrolled at a London drama school. His family all thought, 'Here we go again. He must be mad. Another ten-minute wonder.'

He proved them wrong. But, certainly, not many top-liners start in the business at twenty-six. His career so far has embraced all Britain's national companies—the RSC, the National, and the Royal Court—and, thanks to the power of television, Gareth Hunt is a household name on both sides of the Atlantic.

Now his name is associated with a well-known brand of coffee, and he is overjoyed about it. "If people think of me in terms of a cup of coffee, then I don't mind," he muses. "The thing in this business is to be remembered for *something*, so who's worried whether it's Hamlet or coffee beans?"

"I'm an impulsive fellow, as my life has shown. I can't stay still for long. I must keep moving. And, you never know . . . Surrey today, Los Angeles tomorrow. Who knows what 1985 will bring?"



Protein, carbohydrates, minerals and vitamins—all are found abundantly in winter vegetables; and combined with other ingredients, they make delicious meals, says Liz Burn

### POTATO AND BACON HOTPOT

*Serves 4*

2 lb. potatoes, peeled and thickly sliced

1 lb. onions, peeled and sliced into rings

8 oz. collar or hock bacon scraps, derinded and sliced thinly

Pepper and ½ level teaspoon salt

1 oz. butter, melted

½ pint milk

4-pint casserole, buttered

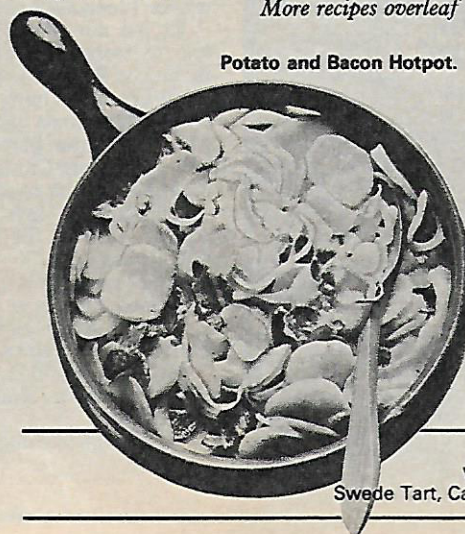
Set the oven to moderately hot, Gas Mark 5 or 375°F/190°C.

Layer the potatoes, onions and bacon in the casserole, seasoning between each layer, ending with a layer of potatoes. Brush the top with the melted butter and pour the milk round the potatoes.

Cover with a lid and bake towards the top of the oven for 50 minutes, then remove the lid and bake uncovered for 15–20 minutes until the potatoes are tender and the top is crisp and brown.

*More recipes overleaf*

Potato and Bacon Hotpot.



### GOLDEN SWEDE TART

*Serves 4–6*

*For the pastry:*

6 oz. wholewheat flour

Pinch of salt

3 oz. soft margarine

3 fl. oz. cold water

*For the filling:*

1½ lb. swede

2 level teaspoons Marmite

¼ pint milk

2 eggs, size 3, beaten

5 oz. Cheddar cheese, grated

Pepper and a little salt

Watercress to garnish

9-inch round flan tin, lightly oiled

**Make the pastry:** Put the flour, salt and margarine in a bowl and mix together with a fork until the mixture resembles bread-crumbs. Using a round-bladed knife, mix in the water to form a very soft dough. Gently bring the dough together by hand. Leave in the bowl, cover and chill for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, peel and dice the swede, place in a large pan in an inch of boiling water, cover and cook until almost soft; drain well.

Set the oven to fairly hot, Gas Mark 6 or 400°F/200°C. Roll out the pastry on a well-floured surface and line the flan tin with it. Using the back of a teaspoon, spread the Marmite over the base of pastry case, then spoon the cooked swede over the top.

Mix the milk, eggs, and 4 oz. of the cheese together; season well, then pour over the swede. Sprinkle the remaining cheese over the top and bake for 35 minutes until firm to the touch and lightly browned.

Garnish with watercress.

Opposite, clockwise from the top: Grated Vegetable Cakes, Potato and Bacon Hotpot, Golden Swede Tart, Carrot and Leek Gratin, Spicy Cabbage and Beetroot.