

Bobby Baker

### **Icing On The Cake?**

I've got memories stretching back miles from the NRLA. I remember it from Nottingham, even though I never went there – it's that etched in my mind. But I was there for the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in Glasgow in 1990 – which is definitely my favourite memory of them all.

Nikki asked me to do some sort of cake-like thing. It felt daunting, back in London, to work out what would do the occasion justice – especially as I'd have to fit whatever it was into the nifty, although very ugly, 'old lady' trolley-on-wheels that I used for transporting props etc. on train journeys to venues.

My preparations were obsessively detailed and involved a 3-tier cake tin, one iced sponge cake, enough buns to fill the bottom two tiers, party candles, white tape, scissors, safety pins and matches.

I'll never forget the night before the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – I went to see The Wooster Group for the first time, at Tramway. It was such a remarkable experience that I couldn't sleep – literally.

The next day I safety-pinned the buns all over a white overall – I can't remember how. I fixed tapes to the cake board and stuck in 10 candles. The party was a full-on event. Then suddenly it was the cake moment. In a flap I asked Bob Pringle, the production manager, and Steve Slater, Nikki's assistant, to help me get ready. There was an awful frozen moment when I realised I'd have to take my jeans and top off if they were to help put the overall on – but we managed in a British sort of way. I tied the cake to my head. As Bob lit the candles it occurred to me that this was probably the most stupid thing I'd done out of many, to walk around with flaming candles on my head.

But then I arrived, Nikki blew out the candles, everyone cheered and I just wandered around happily asking people to pluck a bun.

Suddenly I saw a member of the Wooster Group grinning at me. It was my top hero from the night before and ever since – Ron Vawter. He laughed – and took a bun. One moment of utter bliss that sums up the best of the NRLA.