

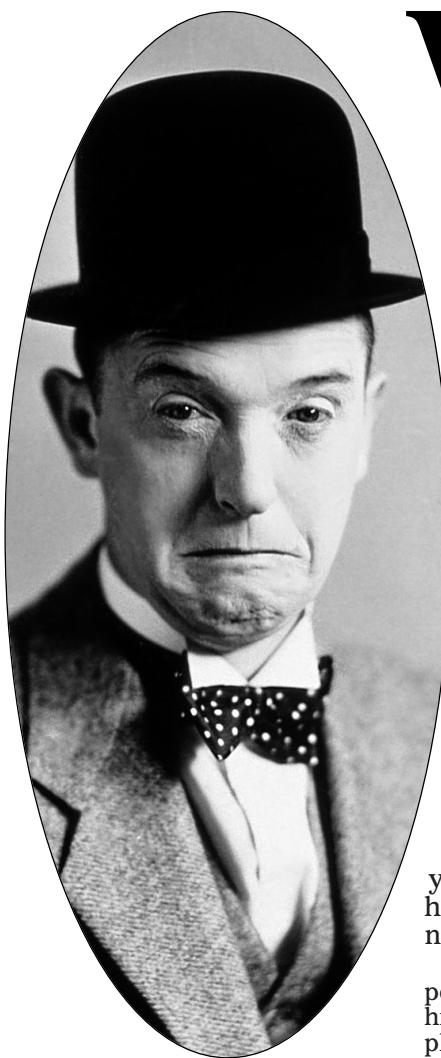
Stirling Castle on YouTube

THE final instalment in a trilogy of mini-movies about Stirling Castle's refurbished Renaissance Royal Palace has been launched on the internet.

Entitled A Glimpse of Magnificence, the film highlights the sumptuous palace interiors that have been returned to how they might have looked in the mid-16th Century by some of the world's finest craftsmen and women.

The films can be viewed on the Stirling Castle and Historic Scotland YouTube channels.

Linda Kong, Historic Scotland Digital Manager, said, "Our first two short films gave us a chance to open the palace to UK and overseas viewers and let them see the work that was taking place."



Was this Stan's first fine mess?

Young comic almost set fire to Tyne home

By Bill Gibb

LAUREL and Hardy may have been one of the hottest comedy double acts in Hollywood history.

But a new book reveals that young Stan Laurel was even hotter stuff growing up in the north-east of England.

In fact, one of his first theatrical performances could have been his last — when he set the place on fire!

Stan was so keen on performing that his dad, who was a theatrical impresario, built him a mini theatre at the family's North Shields home.

"It was quite a substantial house and the theatre was in the attic," explains Danny Lawrence, author of a new book, *The Making of Stan Laurel*, out this week.

"Craftsmen set it up

“His years in North Shields were important in his life”

and Stan would write, produce and act in his own plays.

"The last occasion the theatre was used Stan and the local butcher's boy were taking part in a stage fight and they rather lost the plot.

"They forgot it was supposed to be pretend and they rolled over so much they crashed into the paraffin lamps that were acting as footlights.

"His dad was, fortunately, on hand with a fire extinguisher or the whole house could have gone up.

"Stan lost his eyebrows for a time but apart from that there were no further serious consequences.

"That was certainly the end of his home theatre, though."

Danny, who's a retired sociologist, grew up just a few hundred yards from



Tribute to a local hero

PERSIMMON HOMES built new houses on the site of Stan's old family home at Dockway Square, North Shields.

As a tribute to the area's most famous former resident they

commissioned a statue to be erected in his memory.

Stan looks a bit nonplussed as he's ferried over the River Tyne (above) before being lowered into place (left).



where Stan spent a large part of his childhood.

And he set out to write the new book to document the importance of those formative years, feeling that the part the north-east played in the development of the man who'd later team up with Oliver Hardy to bring laughter to millions has been somewhat overlooked.

"It just struck me that while Stan lived in my home town, relatively little was known about that," says Danny.

"There's a lot known about his association with Ulverston in Cumbria where he was born.

"Bishop Auckland, where he lived for a very short time, recently claimed him as their own and there's a bit of a turf war between them and Cumbria.

"And, of course, he famously made his stage debut in Glasgow at the Panopticon Theatre in Trongate.

"That time was pivotal in launching his career.

"So I'm not trying in any way to take away the importance of his Ulverston or Glasgow days but to make the picture more complete.

"He spent the best part of 10 years in North Shields, from about the age of five until 15 when he went to Glasgow, so they are pretty important years in any boy's life.

"And Stan definitely developed his passion for making people laugh at that stage."

In fact, Danny reckons that influences from his decade in the north-east of England were not only to live with him for

the rest of his days, but can also be seen in many of the classic shorts, including Oscar-winning *The Music Box*.

"That's the one where Stan and Ollie try to take a piano up a flight of steps to deliver it to a house," adds Danny.

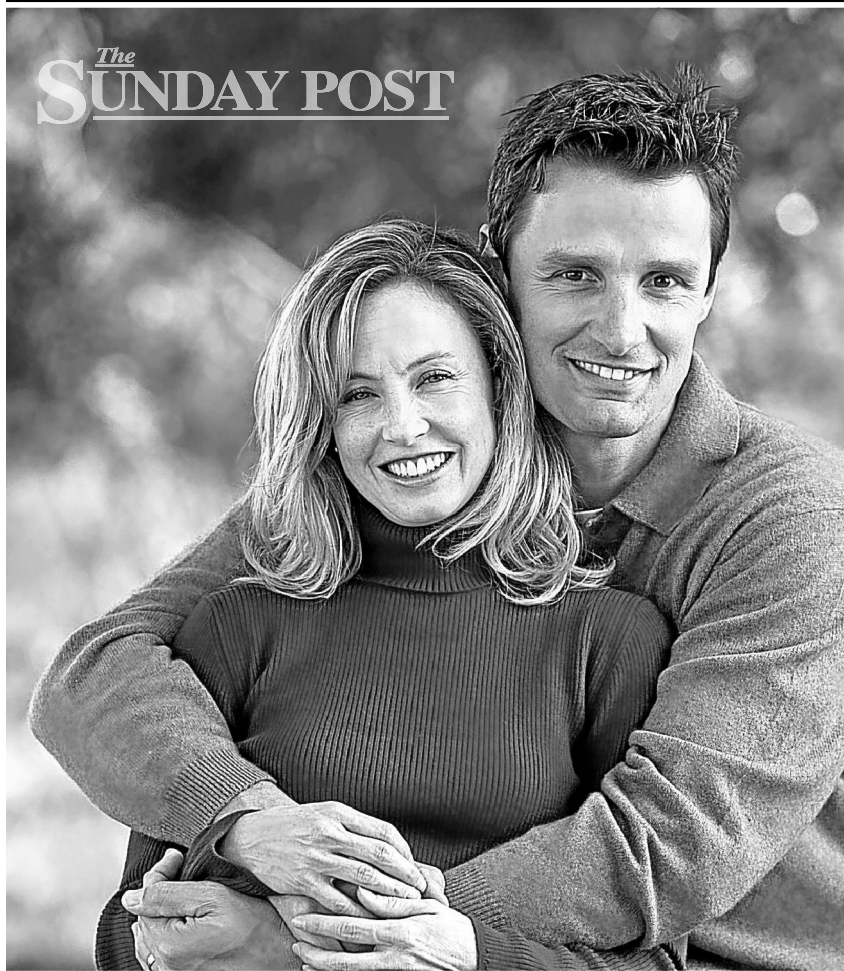
"I have a photo in the book of the actual stairs in Los Angeles used and also pictures of a remarkably similar, steep, narrow flight of stairs still in North Shields which Stan would have gone up many a time to get from the quayside to his house. I'm convinced they provided inspiration.

"And because of the maritime and fishing background he grew up in, there are lots of scenes and references to fishing and sailors in the pair's films."

■ *The Making of Stan Laurel: Echoes of a British Boyhood* by Danny Lawrence, £29.95. ISBN 978-0-7864-6312-1.

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