

For Shakespeare's Birthday

SOME perceptive critic once pointed out that, except for Shakespeare, all the great English dramatists are Irish. However, while the English may recognise this with dismay they can console themselves by remembering that they still have the greatest of them all. It is probable, too, that Shakespeare was born on April 23—St. George's Day—and he died (with a dramatist's instinct for a good curtain) on that day also.

To celebrate his anniversary the NZBS are presenting the New Zealand



Players, with guest stars Barbara Jefford and Keith Michell, in an adaptation by their producer Richard Campion of *The Taming of the Shrew*. This play is one of Shakespeare's earlier efforts, written somewhere about 1594. There has been much speculation about whether it was produced in collaboration with another author, and, in the eclecticism of Globe Theatre play-carpentering during Shakespeare's early career, this may well have been so. The history of the tale of the shrew who is married and tamed by a high-handed, reckless gallant, reads like a Hollywood credit list—one of those "Based on a story by X, based on an idea by Y, based on a nightmare by Z" kind of thing. Also in 1594 another play, *The Taming of A Shrew*, had appeared, partly based on the *Supposes* of Gascoigne, which in turn was an adaptation of Ariosto's *Suppositi*.

The crudity of these earlier versions carries over in some degree to Shakespeare's version, and many people (including, of course, ardent feminists) have objected to its shrew-taming methods and especially to the conclusion, in which Katherina meekly submits her hand to Petruchio's foot. However, these things probably pleased the hen-pecked husbands in the audience enormously and have gone on tickling their vanity ever since.

The Shrew is a rough-and-tumble comedy with little poetic atmosphere, but the characters are broadly and humorously defined in a plot which is just one disguised thing after another. The Padua of the setting is a mock Italian city which looks more like London every day, and the pretence that Katherina is a fair Italian maid wears rather thin when she is constantly referred to in the plain English fashion as "Kate!" There is good fun in *The Taming of the Shrew*, and it leads on to the delightful summer-time comedies of Shakespeare's "middle period"—*Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*.

The Taming of the Shrew will be heard from all YC stations at 9.30 p.m. on Saturday, April 23.

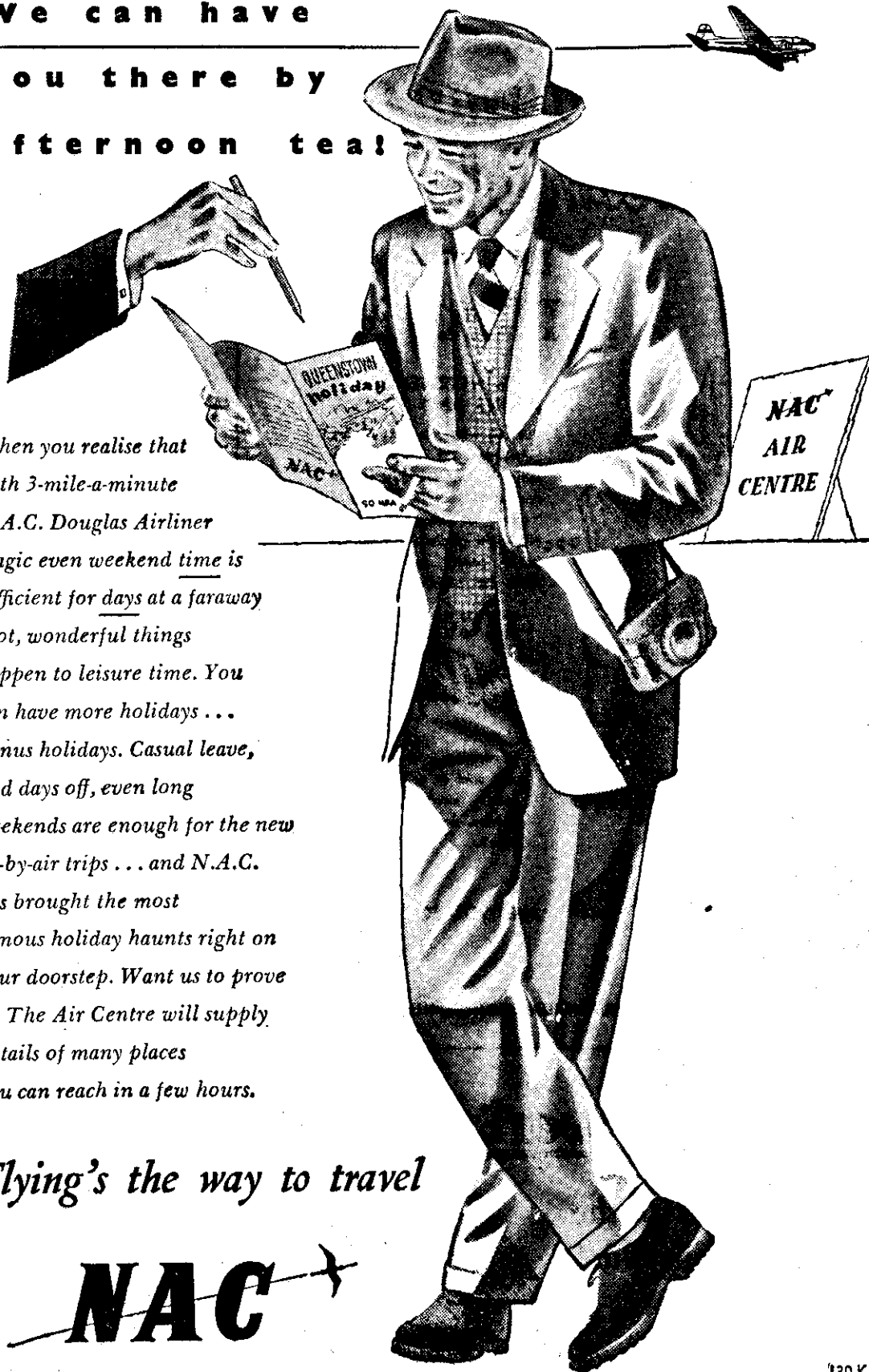
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