

**Herbert J. Collings and Maskelynes' Entertainment Agency
A children's show in 1934**

COL LING SOO

ROYAL COMMAND CHINESE MAGICIAN

GOLD MEDALLIST AND PAST PRESIDENT OF THE MAGIC CIRCLE



An Ideal Entertainer for Children's Parties

Introduction

This article tells the story of a lady wishing to book an oriental conjurer for a children's party. She contacted Maskelynes' Entertainment Agency which, not knowing of a suitable oriental magician, recommended Herbert J. Collings. Although not Chinese, Collings had a successful children's show in which he performed in costume and make-up to appear Chinese. He used the name Col Ling Soo. That kind of thing was acceptable at the time, but today it would be condemned as cultural appropriation.

The Davenport Collection has the paperwork relating to this booking. It is of interest as an example from the 1930s of how the correspondence between a booker and the Agency would progress to secure a successful outcome. The paperwork is set out in date order from start to finish. A few editorial comments have been added to highlight specific points.

15th January, 1934.

Mrs. H. Aris,
The Redbourne Hotel,
Great Portland Street,
W.1.

Dear Madam,

Further to our conversation of this morning I have asked Mr. Noel Maskelyne about an oriental conjurer for your children's party on the 3rd February. He says that he does not know of one who can do more than about twenty minutes but he feels sure that Mr. Herbert Collins would be the very person to get. If you liked there is no reason at all why the children should know he is not a real Chinaman. His make-up is marvellous and his robes some of the most beautiful from China.

We enclose herewith our form of instructions for entertainers and, if you approve of our suggestion, we should be grateful if you would be so kind as to complete it and return it to us, when we can make final arrangements with Mr. Collins, who is free on that date and would go to Lyndhurst for a fee of Five Guineas and expenses.

Assuring you of our best attention at all times,

Yours faithfully,
p.p. MASKELYNES LIMITED.

Maskelynes got the name wrong! It is Collings, not Collins.

Mrs Aris is told that the children need not know that the magician is not Chinese.

With
Messrs. Maskelynes
Compliments.

St. George's Hall,
Langham Place, W.

£5. 6. 0.
Lymington
Feb. 3rd.
4 - 6.
1 hr.
Southampton.
45 - 1 hr.
12 - 10.

Oriental 12
Herbert Collins's

Notes jotted down on the back of a compliment slip.

DIRECTORS:
F. F. H. SCHROEDER
W. A. W. SCHROEDER
H. C. WEATHERLY

TELEPHONES:
MUSEUM 1030
" 1713
TELEGRAMS:
REDBOURITE, LONDON

REDBOURNE HOTEL, LTD.
GT. PORTLAND STREET, LONDON, W.1

Jan 16. 1934

Dear Miss Maskelyne

Thank you very much for your letter & for
judging out about Mr Hubert Collins for my party.
I think this will all be most suitable.

I have put the hours of my party 4 - 6.30
but of course the entertainment would only be for
part of that time - when Mr Collins comes there
will be time to see if tea would come first or
after.

I agree to the fees etc.

I am
Yours truly
S. D. Aris

Mrs Aris replies to Maskelynes, saying that she agrees with the details for the booking.

17th January, 1934.

Herbert Collings, Esq.,
18 Ravenslea Road,
S.W. 12.

Dear Mr. Collings,

This is to confirm the date we booked for you by telephone on the 3rd February at Northerwood House, Lyndhurst, Hants.

Our client's name is Mrs. Herbert Aris and she particularly wants an oriental conjurer and as we dont know a real on who can do more than about 15 minutes, we thought you would be most suitable. It is a children's party, ranging from 8 to 14 year old, to be held from 4 to 8.30, and she is not sure yet what time she wants you to appear but she wants about 45 minutes during that time. The show will be held in a drawing room 50 x 40 feet.

The nearest station is Southampton West. Mrs. Aris tells me that the best train is 12.30 from Waterloo arriving at 2 o'clock, and there is a train back at 6.22. A car will be sent to meet you at Southampton. If you would let me know if you propose catching this train we can make the necessary arrangements.

Your fee for this date will be Five Guineas and expenses.

Yours faithfully,
P.P. MSKELYNES LIMITED.

Maskelynes write to Collings with full details of the booking.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ENTERTAINERS

SUPPLIED BY

Maskelynes' Entertainment Agency.

Town Lyndhurst, Hants.
Date 3rd February, 1934.
Performance by Mrs. Herbert Collins
Accompanied by _____
(Please state whether services of a pianist are available).
Commencing at 4 o'clock, in _____ parts
Probably over at 6.30 (entertainment to be for ^{3/4} hr. & then ² hours that time)
Full address where performance is to be given Northerwood House
Lyndhurst - Hants.
Nearest Railway Station Southampton West
Will conveyance be sent to meet entertainers? Yes
Terms Five Guineas and expenses.
Will entertainers have to stay the night? NO
(If obliged to stay, accommodation should be provided, or expenses allowed, unless included in the Fee by arrangement).
Best Trains Waterloo 12.30, Southampton West 2.05 (return 6.22 or 7.15)
GENERAL REMARKS: Size of Hall Drawing room 50 x 40 feet.
Special Requirements _____
Class of Audience children from 8 - 14 (County families)
Name of Client Mrs. Herbert ARIS
Address Northerwood House, Lyndhurst, Hants.

NOTICE:—Clients arranging Public Entertainments are requested not to advertise the above performance as "Maskelynes' Entertainment"; it may be announced as "Supplied by" or "Under the Direction of Maskelynes' Entertainment Agency."

ALL FEES ARE PAYABLE DIRECT TO MASKELYNES, LIMITED, at St. George's Hall, W., on the satisfactory completion of the engagement.

If, owing to illness or any other reason, the client should find it necessary to cancel the above engagement, the client agrees to pay one half of the fee and give date of re-engagement within a period of six months, when the engagement will be fulfilled for the remaining half of the fee, provided the same entertainer is available.

This is the standard form that Maskelynes used to capture the details of a booking.

Mrs Aris filled in the form and sent it back to Maskelynes with her letter dated 16 January. Additional information was then added by Maskelynes.

Note that conveyance (transport) was to meet the performer at the local railway station. In the 1930s few performers had cars and the booker had to provide transport from the station to the house. Mrs Aris lived at Northerwood House, Lyndhurst, a very large house.

TELEPHONE
BATTERSEA 0386.
STATION
WANDSWORTH COMMON.

18, RAVENSLEA ROAD,
BALHAM, S.W.

January 21st

Mr. W. Ashelynes Esq.

Dear Sir
Thank you for your letter re
Lyndhurst Feby 3rd I shall be pleased
to book this date for an orientals show
of 45 minutes. for a fee of £5.5.0
plus expenses.

Note the train 12.30 from Waterloo
arriving Southampton 2 o'clock.

With thanks

Yours faithfully
Herbert Collings

Collings books the show into his diary.

23rd January, 1934.

Mrs. Aris,
Northerwood House,
Lyndhurst,
Hants.

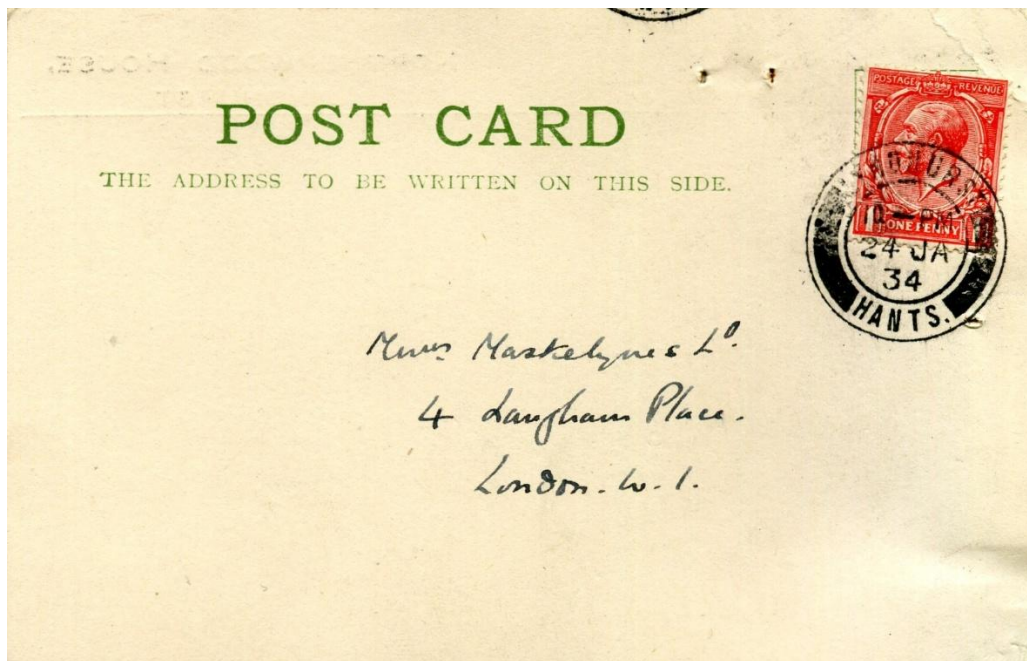
Dear Madam,

We thank you for your letter of the 16th instant enclosing our form of instructions for entertainers, and stating that you agree to have Mr. Herbert Collings for your party.

We consider this engagement is now confirmed and we have made final arrangements with Mr. Collings who tells us that he will catch the 12.30 from Waterloo arriving at Southampton West at 2 O'clock. He will be grateful if you could arrange for a car to meet the train.

We are, dear madam,
Yours faithfully,
p.p. MASKELYNES LIMITED.

Maskelynes write to Mrs Aris confirming that the engagement is booked.



FROM MRS. ARIS, NORTHERWOOD HOUSE,
TELEPHONE: LYNDHURST 66. Jan 24. LYNDHURST.

Thank you for your letter.
I write to confirm the arrangements for Feb 3.
Mr Collings will be met at Southampton West.
at 2.0 p.m.

A good many of the guests are now down with
Chickenpox - but unless there is more of this
there is no reason to postpone the party.

On 24 January Mrs Aris sends a postcard confirming arrangements for the show. She hopes that an outbreak of chicken pox amongst the guests will not cause the show to be cancelled.

5th February, 1934.

Mrs. Aris,
Northerwood House,
Lyndhurst.
Hants.

Dear Madam,

We enclose herewith the account for Mr.
Herbert Collings trusting that he gave every satisfaction
at your party on the 3rd of February.

Yours faithfully,
p.p. MASKELYNES LIMITED.

MASKELYNES LIMITED.

TELEPHONE NO. :
LANGHAM 1545.

BOX OFFICE :

MASKELYNES' THEATRE,
LANGHAM PLACE,
LONDON, W.1.

7th February 1934

To entertainment at :-

Mrs. Aris,
Northerwood House,
Lyndhurst,
Hants.

3rd February, 1934.

Expenses	£5.5.0.
	1.3.0.
	£ <u>6.8.0.</u>

15/6

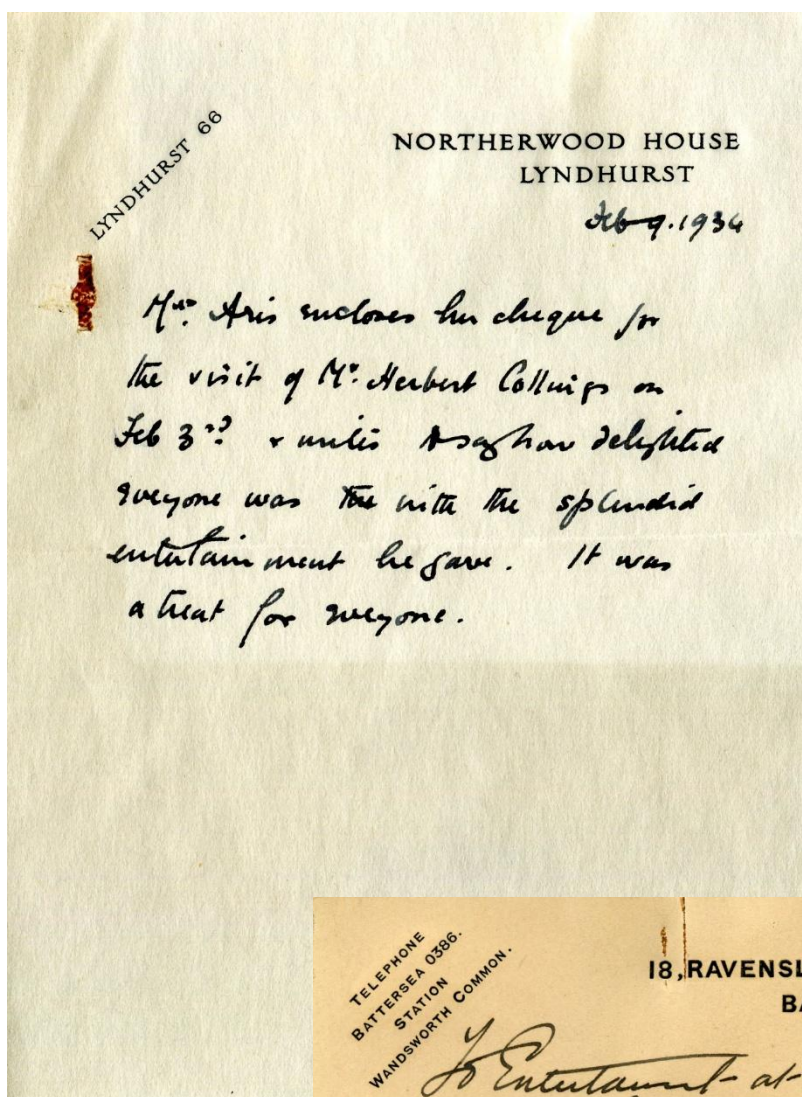
Exp.

5-5-0
<u>15-9</u>
4-9-3
<u>1-3</u>
5-12-3

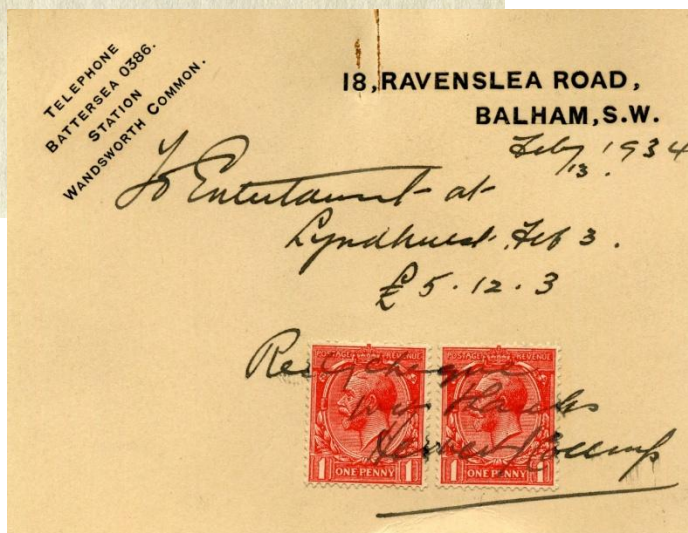
Maskelynes send their bill to Mrs Aris.

The story ends happily

The client is pleased with Collings' performance. Her letter says: "Mrs Aris encloses her cheque for the visit of Mr Herbert Collings on Feb 3rd and writes to say how delighted everyone was with the splendid entertainment he gave. It was a treat for everyone."



Collings receives his fee and expenses, less the 15% commission due to Maskelynes' Entertainment Agency. He completes the process by sending a receipt to Maskelynes.



Edited by John Davenport

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