



My Father's Fortune:
A Life, by Michael
Frayn (Faber, £8.99)

Thomas Frayn may have thought his son Michael a bit “dozy”. But Michael has nothing but respect for his father, who held the family together despite having to support his mother and disabled sister, his mother-in-law, and, after his wife died, be the sole carer of his two young children while coping with progressive deafness brought on by a genetic condition. Thomas endures everything “with courage and humour”, never ceasing to be “the cocky young man from the wrong side of the Holloway Road”. When he died aged 69, he had few possessions and little money: he moved “lightly over the earth, scarcely leaving a footprint, scarcely a shadow”. And yet, writing some 40 years after his death, Michael Frayn realises that his father had left him “a fortune”: his humour, his indifference to all systems of belief, and his smile - the one thing people always remember about Tommy: “It’s as if he has faded, like the Cheshire Cat, until only the smile remains.” Frayn’s beautifully written memoir of suburban family life is both funny and deeply moving. **PDS**