

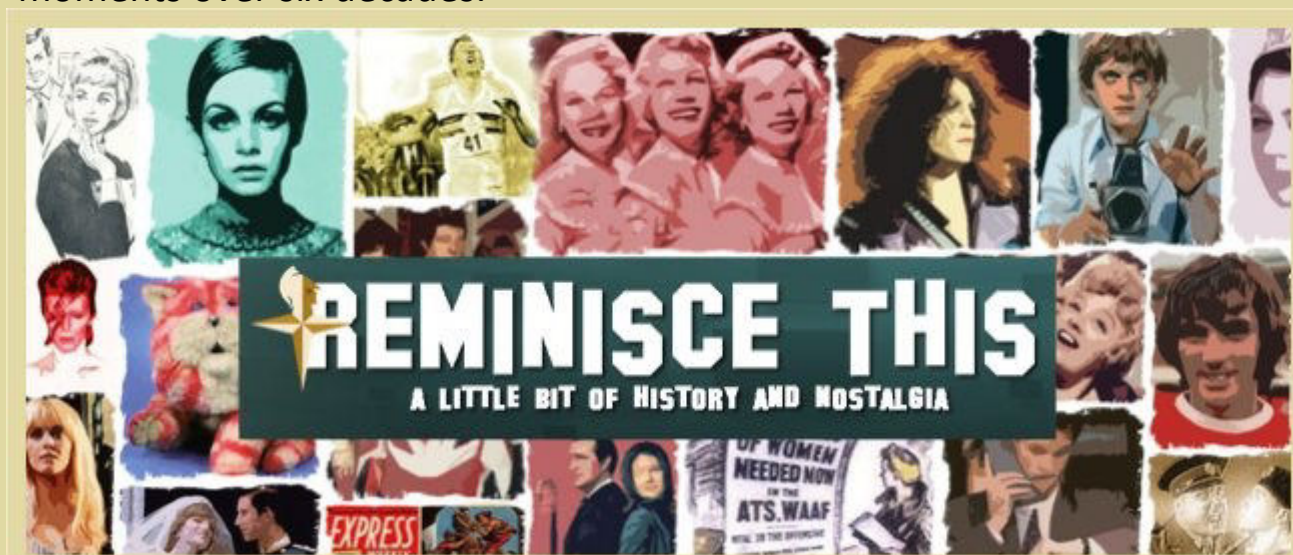


The Magazine of Television Heaven: Issue #5 April 2025

Nostalgia Special



Celebrating British culture from the 1940s to the 1990s - covering television, film, music, personal memories, history and iconic people and moments over six decades.



REMINISCING TELEVISION MOVIES MUSIC STYLE HISTORY

About this Magazine

According to today's bureaucrats and regulators, those of us who were kids in the 50s, 60s and 70s probably shouldn't have survived...

- We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles or latches on doors or cabinets and it was fine to play with pans.
- When we rode our bikes we wore no helmets, just flip flops, shorts and brightly coloured clackers on our wheels.
- As kids, if our family had a car, we would travel without seatbelts or airbags. Travelling in the front was a treat
- We drank water from the garden hose and public fountains - not from a bottle. It tasted exactly the same!
- We ate dripping sandwiches, bread and butter pudding and drank fizzy juice with sugar in it, but we were never overweight because we were always playing outside.
- We shared one drink with four friends, from one bottle or one can and nobody ever got ill as a result.
- We would spend hours building go karts out of scraps and then went top speed down the hill, only to find out we had forgotten about brakes. After running into stinging nettles and bushes a few times we learned to solve the problem.
- We would leave home in the morning and play all day, as long as we were back before it got dark. No one was able to reach us all day and no one minded.
- We did not have PlayStations and X Boxes - no video games at all. No 99+ TV channels, no videos, no surround sound, no mobile phones, no personal computers, no internet chat rooms. We had friends. -We went outside and found them.
- We played football, elastics and street rounders -and sometimes that ball really hurt!
- We fell out of trees, got cuts and grazes, broken bones and broken teeth and there were no lawsuits. They were accidents. We learned not to do the same things again.
- We had fights, punched each other hard and got black and blue. We did not get assaulted -we simply lost a fight. We learned to get over it.
- We walked to each others homes and school.
- We made up games with sticks and tennis balls and ate live things, and although we were told it would happen, we did not have our eyes fall out and nor did live stuff grow inside us.
- We rode our bike in packs of seven and wore our coats only by the hood.
- Our actions were our own and the consequences were expected.
- The idea of a parent bailing us out if we broke the law was unheard of. They actually sided with the law. Imagine that!
- This generation has produced some of the best risk takers, problem solvers and inventors ever. The past 70 years have been an explosion of innovation and new ideas. We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned how to deal with them.

And if you were born during that period -or you wish you had been -this magazine is dedicated to you.

THE 1940s



The dawn of 1940 for Great Britain was blighted from the outset by the ominous, uncertain shadows of anxiety and frustration caused by the so-called 'Phoney War', which had held sway since the declaration of hostilities against Germany in 1939.

The great cold wave, which struck Europe in January 1940, caused the river Thames itself to freeze over for the first time since 1888. This was to prove symbolic of the desperate determination with which the nation would collectively face up to the omnipresent threat that would come perilously close to eclipsing the fragile light that illuminated the dangerous road, which ultimately lead to their finest hour.

With the elevation of Winston Churchill to Prime Minister in May 1940, the country found itself lead by a man whose intelligence, wit, stubborn courage and intense natural pride in his heritage transformed him overnight into an almost Arthurian incarnation of everything which the people themselves believed made Britain great. Under his eloquent, charismatic command the people faced up to the privations and terrible carnage of the first half of the new decade with all the single-minded, stoically accepting and mordantly humorous determination that would confound Nazi expectations, and set a world-wide precedence for unrelenting resistance in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds.

Through the material hardships of rationing and the unremitting destruction caused to cities throughout the nation by the bombs of the Blitz and the later advanced technological threat posed by the deadly "V" rockets, ordinary people consistently yet understatedly faced the extraordinary, armed with little save resolve, courage and the fortifying sentimental promise of eventually being able to meet again, while bluebirds flew over the white cliffs of Dover, as popularised by the nostalgically reassuring songs of such favourites as Vera Lynn and Anne Shelton, whilst maintaining a typically British sense of humour as epitomised by the radio antics of the Crazy Gang and the irrepressible ITMA crew.

Then, just when it seemed almost as if war was destined to be the natural way of things, the country suddenly found itself swept up in the euphoric release embodied by the tumultuous celebrations that marked V.E. Day on the 8th May, 1945, swiftly followed by V.J. Day in August of that year. The war had been won, but the price in human lives was unspeakably high. Fifty-five million had forfeit their lives worldwide.

Just as war had changed the physical landscape of the country, so had it subtly shifted other, more fundamental social attitudes. Even as 1946 dawned with the first civilian test flights to embark from London's new Heathrow airport site, the country was discovering that changes forced upon it by the needs of conflict, such as the role of women in the workforce, had allowed genies out of bottles that would prove impossible to put back.

From 1946 to the end of the decade the seeds of what was to become the whirlwind, rapid, sometimes surprisingly stark, social change of the 1950's were sown. Ranging from Churchill's failure to gain re-election, through the nationalisation of key industries such as the coal mines to the fashion sensation caused by designer Christian Dior's sleek and radical 'hour glass' designs for women; the signs were there. London's austere hosting of the first Olympic Games held since 1933, helped lighten the initial post war mood, while the birth of Prince Charles and television's tentative taking over of the primary entertainment mantle from an ailing British film industry were all portents of what was to follow.

Ultimately, the nineteen forties were a time of unprecedented change on a multitude of levels. From war to the first small stirrings of massive social change, they can now be seen with hindsight as 'the' crucial period in the development of the Great Britain that exists today.

ICONS OF THE 1940s



WINSTON CHURCHILL is quite rightly regarded as one of the greatest wartime leaders in history. A noted statesman and orator, Churchill led Britain and inspired the country through speeches and radio broadcasts with his steadfast refusal to consider defeat, surrender or accept a compromise, and led the country until victory had been secured over Nazi Germany. He was the first person created an honorary citizen of the United States and voted 'The Greatest Briton' in a 2002 BBC poll.



VERA LYNN whose musical recordings and performances were enormously popular during World War II was known as 'The Forces Sweetheart.' Her radio programme 'Sincerely Yours' sent messages to troops serving abroad and she also visited hospitals seeing new mothers to send personal messages to their husbands overseas. During the war she toured Egypt, India and Burma, giving concerts for the troops. Her most iconic song was 'We'll Meet Again' which resonated with soldiers going off to fight and their families and sweethearts. In 2009 Lynn became the oldest living artist to make it into No.1 in the British album chart, at the age of 92.



GUY GIBSON Wing Commander - VC, DSO & Bar, the first CO of the Royal Air Force's 617 Squadron, which he led the Dam Busters raid in 1943 in aircraft provided with the bouncing bomb designed and developed by Barnes Wallis. The devastation caused by the raids was extensive but the Germans managed to rebuild and recover more quickly than expected. However, the propaganda boost given to the allied war effort was considerable. Gibson continued to fly missions over Germany (he flew over 170 in total) before a fault with a fuel tank selector caused his plane to run out of fuel and crash near Steenberg, the Netherlands, in September 1944. He was 26.



ST PAUL CATHEDRAL became an inspiration to the British people during World War II. In the Battle of Britain, the Luftwaffe attempted to bomb Britain into submission by pounding London and other major cities, but St. Paul's miraculously escaped major bomb damage, even as historic buildings nearby were reduced to rubble. Images of St. Paul's framed by smoke and fire became a symbol of Britain's indomitable spirit.



"OVER PAID, OVER SEXED AND OVER HERE!" ...a phrase which was coined during the Second World War making fun of the US Army stationed in Britain prior to D-Day. Although said in good humour there was an undercurrent of unease conveyed by the phrase, especially amongst British men, who resented the attraction of GIs, with their ready supply of nylons, cigarettes and chocolate, amongst British women.

ICONS OF THE 1940s



ANDERSON SHELTER In 1938, Sir John Anderson in charge of Air Raid Precautions (ARP), commissioned the engineer, William Patterson, to design a small and cheap shelter that could be erected in people's gardens. Within a few months nearly one and a half million of what became known as Anderson shelters were distributed to people living in areas expected to be bombed by the Luftwaffe. They were given free to the poor but anyone who earned over £5.00 a week had to pay £7.00



THE SPITFIRE was designed as a short-range high-performance interceptor aircraft with a higher top speed than several contemporary fighters. During the Battle of Britain there was a public perception that the Spitfire was the RAF fighter of the battle whereas in fact the more numerous Hawker Hurricane actually shouldered a greater proportion of the burden against the Luftwaffe. After the Battle of Britain the Spitfire became a legend and continues to hold an iconic place in the memories of many.



WOMEN OF BRITAIN In the 1930s, social roles were clearly defined. A woman's place was in the home. With the onset of war, everything changed. Before long, women made up one third of the total workforce in the metal and chemical industries, as well as in ship-building and vehicle manufacture. They worked on the railways, canals and on buses. Women built Waterloo Bridge in London. Women's contributions to the war effort were highlighted in newspapers and magazines and after 1945 images of women, especially in uniform, were used to sell everything from cigarettes to shoes.



TELEVISION following years of blank screens, the BBC Television Service re-opened in June 1946, heralding the start of the modern television era. Although it would be more than a decade before television would have an impact in the home, the televised Victory Parade put TV back in the headlines. Viewers watched the procession and ceremony, seeing more than anyone in the crowds could possibly have seen. The home screens filled with close-up shots of the King and Queen, and the statesmen who had seen the country through the war, and those who were ready to tackle the arduous of peace.



MUFFIN THE MULE first trotted on to our screens in 1946 in the first television programme made for children named, appropriately, 'For the Children'. The show was broadcast live by the BBC from Alexandra Palace from 1946 with Muffin dancing on top of a piano as Annette Mills played it. A separate series of 15 minute episodes, 'Muffin the Mule', was broadcast from 1952, with his signature tune "We want Muffin". A wide range of Muffin spin-off merchandise was made including books, records, games and toys.

BRITISH FILMS OF THE 1940s



IN WHICH WE SERVE 1942 - A masterful story of men at war. Noel Coward, who also wrote and scored the film, stars as Captain Kinross, leading his men on board a World War II battleship. The under-stated patriotism is what is most moving as the story unfolds via flashbacks. The film offered debuts to Celia Johnson, Richard Attenborough (as an inexperienced stoker), young Daniel Massey and even an infant Juliet Mills. 92nd best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.



FIRES WERE STARTED 1943 - Documentary: An astonishing portrait of the work of firemen during the London Blitz. Directed and scripted by Humphrey Jennings, it was originally intended as a training film, but had a general release to help boost morale. It is an elegant, almost poetic, documentary which proves to be an intimate portrait of a country besieged. The firemen were all real firemen, but the scenes were re-enacted.

89th best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.



HENRY V 1944 - Filmed during World War II and clearly aimed at boosting the confidence of the British, this is a remarkable film version of Shakespeare's play. It was Olivier's debut as a director and he brought passion, spectacle, humour and real poetry to the film, but is also outstanding as the passionate Plantagenet Henry who, at 27, defeated the armies of France at Agincourt. Olivier received a Special Academy Award in 1946 for bringing this film to the screen.

18th best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.



A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH 1946 - gave David Niven one of the best roles of his career. He plays Peter, a World War II pilot who falls for an American radio operator as his plane is about to crash. But heaven makes a mistake and he survives, only to meet the girl in person and fall deeply in love. Now he must plead for his life at a celestial court.

20th best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.



BRIGHTON ROCK 1947 - Fresh-faced young Richard Attenborough took a stark acting change of pace, here playing with chilling presence Pinkie Brown, the vicious teenage leader of a gang of slashers. Based on Graham Greene's 1938 novel (adapted by Greene and Terence Rattigan), this is an impressively made thriller from the Boulting brothers (Roy and John also co-produced the film), with fine performances too by Hermione Baddeley as the singer and Harcourt Williams as the lawyer.

15th best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.

BRITISH FILMS OF THE 1940s



BLACK NARCISSUS 1947 - Sumptuous and powerful story about a group of nuns who struggle to establish a mission in a remote part of the Himalayas. The film is distinguished by Jack Cardiff's Oscar-winning colour cinematography. The final sequences remain stunning, with Deborah Kerr giving a fine performance as the Sister Superior.

44th best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.



THE RED SHOES 1948 - An extraordinarily imaginative film which has quietly established itself as a classic and has the ability to affect some viewers deeply. At its heart is a 14-minute ballet - also called The Red Shoes - based on a Hans Christian Andersen story of a wicked shoe-maker who makes slippers for a young woman who finds they won't let her stop dancing until she dies, exhausted.

9th best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.



THE THIRD MAN 1949 - After half a century, The Third Man remains a bona fide British classic: rich on atmosphere, strong on suspense and blessed with quite wonderful performances. It is the story of a simple American who arrives in post-war Vienna to meet his old friend Harry Lime (Orson Welles), only to learn that Lime has been killed in an accident. But, as he unravels the truth, he is also drawn into the decadent and corrupt world in which Lime existed.

1st best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.



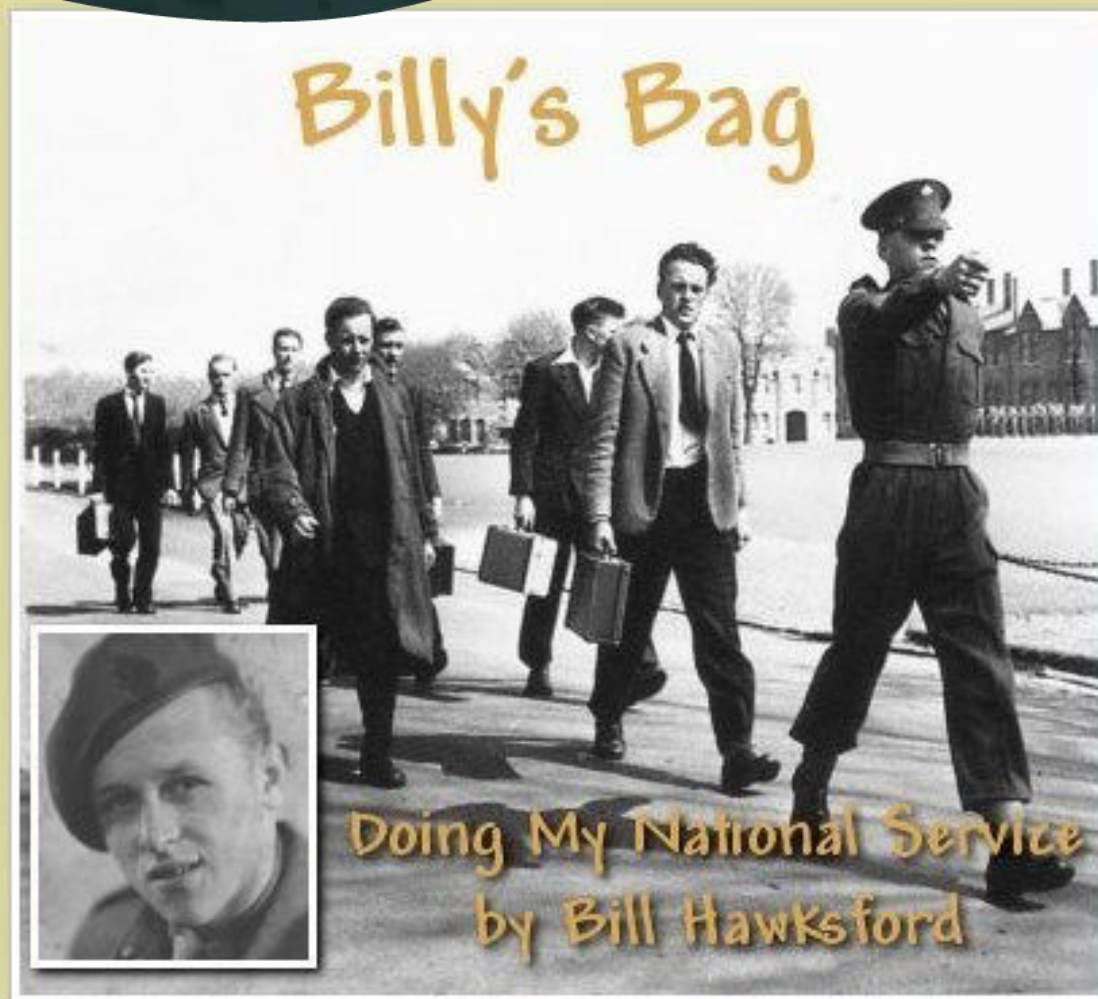
WHISKY GALORE! 1949 - Wonderful whimsy, charmingly directed by Mackendrick. On the fictional Scottish island of Today, the wartime whisky ration has run out and the islanders are devastated. But when an American ship carrying 50,000 cases of Scotch is wrecked off-shore, they take it upon themselves to salvage and hide the booze. Compton Mackenzie, author of the novel on which the film is based, also has a small role as Captain Buncher.

24th best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.



KIND HEARTS AND CORONETS 1949 - A deliciously dark Ealing comedy that elegantly allows the audience to side with the killer as he sets about his task. Dennis Price plays the penniless young hero, ninth in line to inherit the D'Ascoyne dukedom, who systematically sets about murdering the eight in the way to his title all brilliantly played by Alec Guinness.

Voted 6th best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.



Introduction

Conscription had been introduced in 1939 and continued after the Second World War. It was formalised in peacetime by the National Service Act 1948. From January 1 1949, every man over the age of eighteen was expected to serve in the armed forces for eighteen months (this was extended to two years in 1950 as a response to the Korean War), and remain on the reserve list for four years thereafter.

From the end of the war until the birth of The Beatles 2.5 million young men were called up at a rate of 6,000 every fortnight. Although it officially ended on 31st December 1960, the last National Serviceman, Lieutenant Richard Vaughan of the Royal Army Pay Corps, was not discharged until 13 May 1963.

Some young men went willingly, some went reluctantly, but considering that WWII was over, few were prepared for some of the deplorable conditions and the ridiculous circumstances they had to endure during their involuntary servitude.

Presented here are one man's recollections of the first and only peace-time conscription in the UK. Bill Hawksford's account of his service is a nostalgic walk down memory lane for some and of general interest to all. Enjoy reading about this young man's humorous personal escapades and see the British Army through his eyes as a lorry driver, a boxer, a general's chauffeur, a pay clerk, a janitor and a barber, in addition to an enlightening insight into the lesser known military court-martial and the feared detention barracks.

Find out why Bill's father, an ex-RSM, warned him that in the army they played a lot of 'Silly Buggers'.

Billy's Bag: Doing My National Service

By Bill Hawksford

The Prologue



Life began for Billy in the light industrial town of Luton, Bedfordshire, England in 1928 when Luton was known for Vauxhall cars and a third division football club. The boy was born to an Irish mother from Cork and an English father who grew up in a small village in Bedfordshire.

Billy saw little of his father through his teens, because his father was in the army fighting WW11. His father was an extremely honourable hard working man who climbed his way through the ranks to the position of Regimental Sergeant Major in the RASC. Billy had the utmost respect for both of his parents.

The school leaving age in those days was 14 and Billy's father arranged for him to stay on another year hoping to improve his knowledge. Although he tried as hard as everyone else, the information just went in one ear and out the other as though there was nothing in between to absorb it. He was never a good student and the crowded school conditions caused by the evacuees from London during the war exacerbated the situation. However the truth of the matter was that Billy just didn't have what it takes, which they now say is the result of unfair genomes distribution (Biological makeup). So what he's trying to say, is being a dum-dum wasn't his fault and he's not guilty your honour.

The un-achiever's problem was mainly a lack of recall and his spelling, which was atrocious and although he improved it considerably over the years, it is still atrocious. These shortcomings affected many other things and most importantly discouraged him from pursuing further education. An example of the difficulty caused by these problems, was the boy's failure to pass the Morse code and Semaphore tests in the Sea Cadets. If he could remember the codes, he couldn't spell the words and if he could spell the words, he couldn't remember the codes.

He was never keen on history and considered it to be dull chronological events of the past, which had no importance in his life. Billy was unaware that if he didn't learn from the past he was doomed to repeat some of the bad parts - Now practiced with regular monotony by heads of state that normally know the history, but just ignore it.

Unsupervised during the war Billy enjoyed the company of numerous kids from the neighbourhood and had many friends, however his closest companion was always trouble, which just followed him around all the time. Climbing over fences, he was always the one to tear his pants and cuts and bruises were a way of life. He was a menace with fireworks and enjoyed all the other questionable boyhood activities.

Being a rather small boy was a disadvantage at the hands of bullies and not appreciating their attention he devised ways to thwart them. One such ingenious idea was to run away, which was not very successful, because they could always run faster than him. Realising that the aforementioned scenario could be turned into an advantage, Billy modified the exercise by stopping in full flight and rolling himself up into a ball.

REMINISCE THIS

a little bit of nostalgia

The result was that the pursuer, running at full speed, couldn't stop and would run right into the back of him and emulate a glider for a few feet before dropping to the ground with an agonizing thud. (Don't try this at home!) From then on these bullies passed him on the other side of the street as if they didn't recognize him. Billy will always have fond memories of the first flyer whose name was Reggie Peat, but he doubts if Reggie shares his sentiment.

Billy's father told him that bullies are cowards and insisted that he punch them straight in the nose whenever they attacked him in the future and the advice turned out to be as good as the source. It goes without saying that the bullies were the biggest boys in the school and were considered the best fighters. Armed with the experience gained from combating the bullies on the street, some instruction and encouragement from his father, young Billy was well prepared when he started school. One at a time he put the antagonists in their place with his speed and agility, combined with an undaunted determination, which was lacking in his adversaries. It became apparent they didn't have the stomach for this activity when it wasn't going in their favour and to assure that it never would, he was motivated to continue improving his skills. The unexpected outcome of all this physical stuff, which was basically all self-defence up until this point, was that other boys who he had no quarrel with also challenged him to fight. Never one to back down, he always convinced them of the error of their ways and was eventually considered the schools 'Best Fighter.' The major benefit of this exalted position, which carried a lot of respect from the other boys, was that he was seldom picked on and no longer required to defend himself.



As some of us find out when we are complacent, things have a way of changing and the evacuees from London during the war altered the routine at school for a long time. First the evacuees would use the school in the mornings and the natives in the afternoons, and then it was changed to alternate days, which remained. The large influx of evacuee children included many with pugilistic aspirations and contenders for the 'Best Fighter' title began to surface. It was not unlike the Wild West movies where ambitious gentleman in spurs challenged each other to gunfights to satisfy their egos. Groups of evacuees would lay in wait for the titleholder and the hopeful

contender would offer up customary insults in the best Marquis of Queensbury tradition, until there was an exchange of bare knuckles. Again Billy exceeded expectations and maintained his title until moving on to secondary school. There his reputation preceded him and the Wild West nonsense started all over again. After a number of altercations the folk hero worshippers bestowed the questionable title of 'Best Fighter' on him again, where it remained.

Later Billy enjoyed the sport of boxing where he developed an excellent defence as a result of his natural instincts and fast reflexes, which saved his bacon on a number of occasions outside of the ring when particularly large individuals became physical. For reasons, which he never understood and could only assume that it was the embarrassment in front of people, these large antagonists would cease and desist, when they were unable to connect with his swift moving frame after a certain period of time.

As an athlete, amateur boxing became one of his favourites and he derived satisfaction, both as a spectator and a participant from the pure skill of the sport. He never liked hurting people, never struck anyone first outside of the ring and always disengaged at the first opportunity. He retired from the ring after a swelling on one of his ears and being advised that if it happened again, it would have to be

lanced resulting in a wrinkled configuration known as a cauliflower ear. Not wishing to be known as the greengrocer, he quickly found other interests.

His first commercial venture was in the newspaper business as a private contractor, which he felt was an honourable profession and his propensity for hard work and natural business acumen was a good formula for success. He chose this enterprise because he owned the necessary transportation and the merchandise was available at no charge. Unfortunately it was a seasonal business, which was not exactly what he wanted, but he made the best of it while it lasted. It was actually a two-part operation starting in the beginning of November and finished abruptly on the 5th. The first part was to position his soapbox cart with a stuffed effigy at a busy intersection and suggest passers by contribute a penny for the Guy and you know who the guy was! The other side of the business which was equally as lucrative was to collect newspapers door to door for the bonfire on the 5th and sell them to the fish and chip shops for 1 penny a pound. He wasn't concerned that the newspapers were not being used for the implied purpose, because he felt that there was something immoral about burning items which could be put to better use such as keeping fish and chips warm for the populace and providing sweets for small boys. It was also felt that no one would really mind except Guy Fawkes, who probably enjoyed fish and chips in his day also.

He was an industrious boy, which was the only trait in common with his father, but most of what he learned was obtained the hard way. The following story is a good example: A neighbour gave Billy a metal fireplace surround, telling him to sell it to the scrap yard and keep the money, which he did and received 2 shillings. Seizing on the opportunity to get rich, Billy organized a number of friends with soapbox carts to scour the countryside for old metal parts. At the end of the day they converged on the scrap yard with their carts piled high with metal, where the man placed it all on a large scale and handed them 4 pennies. "How can that be?" Billy questioned "You paid me 2 shillings yesterday for only one piece of metal." The man patiently explained that the fire surround was made of brass, which has a much higher value than the other stuff, which was iron and steel. Billy then realized why the metal was dumped in the fields in the first place. Now being able to relate to the subject, he had no difficulty learning about the characteristics and value of metals and alloys. One thing about learning the hard way is that you rarely forget it!

While Billy was growing up his father was away in the army. When his father returned, Billy was busy chasing the girls, drinking and gambling. His father, a man of few words, gave him little advice, but what he did convey turned out to be pearls of wisdom. On reflection, Billy couldn't have been all that stupid, because chasing the girls, drinking and gambling has remained some of the most popular pursuits for the masculine persuasion.

What compares with beautiful females and their stimulating effects? What compares with the pleasure of drinking with good company and the excitement of winning money? Few would turn away from fast horses, friendly women and a little libation!

The boy the army conscripted the same month he turned 18 in 1946 was a 5 feet 5 inch healthy lad with a premature receding hairline. He was almost completely uneducated, having forgotten much of what he learned in school, but he was somewhat wise in the ways of the street after wasting his youth in places like billiard halls and gambling with unsavoury characters. The boy's only accomplishment was learning the art of fisticuffs, which gave him a needed confidence and although he respected everyone, he feared no one - A mindset, which has disadvantages, but probably an asset on balance.

Another shortcoming causing Billy a lot of difficulty later in life was his reluctance to accept nonsense from people. He could only hold his feelings in for a certain period of time and eventually would have to blurt out something regrettable. He resented insincerity, politics and politicians - people of little substance, manipulators, Philadelphia, small dogs and the army. Not necessarily in that order. He empathized with the less fortunate, always believing - 'There but for the grace of God go I.' - *Unknown*.

"You will die in the electric chair," were the words of encouragement predicted by Sister Pat, his first schoolteacher - A tough Irish nun with a knock out punch in both hands, who missed her calling as a prize-fighter. Comforting thoughts when he eventually immigrated to America!

Billy's upbringing left a marked impression. His Irish mother ensured that he didn't place his elbows on the dining table, reached for food or ate with the wrong knife and fork, which had to be positioned correctly on the empty plate. He was disciplined to tip his cap in the presence of ladies, doctors, solicitors, priests, insurance agents and any one else his mother held in high esteem. His mother was intimidated by the class system in England at the time and it was many years before Billy realized that everyone was not his superior. Consequently he developed a mild abiding contempt for authority and the Oxford accent.

Continually in trouble as a boy and recalling some of his exploits in latter years he asked his father how bad he really was when he was young. "You were never malicious," replied his dad, which was an exceptionally welcome compliment.

The stories in this book relate the true accounts of the ridiculous situations Billy experienced in the British Army 1946-1949, which now appear incredulous and funnier in retrospect. Army life would have been so much more acceptable had the humorous events been fully appreciated at the time. On second thoughts they probably would have certified him for being a laughing idiot! - So swing the lamp and come with him on a journey into another place and another time. Enjoy reading his memoirs as he did recalling and writing them.



PART ONE: KEMPSTON BARRACKS

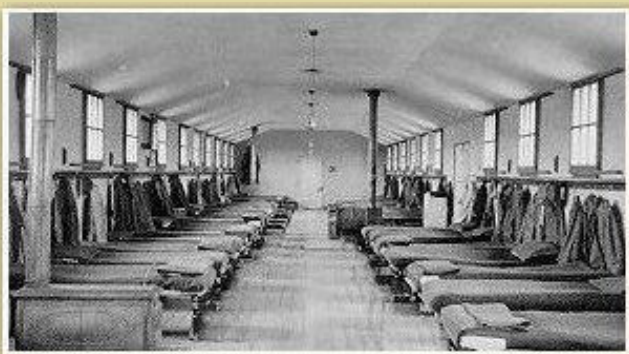
In November 1946 Billy was ordered to report to Kempston Barracks in Bedfordshire for 6 weeks basic training in the British army. Entering the gates of this impressive foreboding looking fortress, which was built in 1875 and could easily be mistaken for a prison, he couldn't help thinking that his only crime was to reach the tender age of 18. He was now one of many young men who were compelled to fulfil a National Service in a uniform and take up arms against the enemies of the Queen to protect the honour of the British Empire - And he hadn't even received the Queen's shilling!

REMINISCE THIS

a little bit of nostalgia

Billy was a romantic young man and the words of the song 'Lily Marlene' were playing in his head as he strolled into the barracks, resigned to become a soldier. In keeping with the song, his imaginative mind conjured up visions of sneaking out of the gate at night to meet an attractive lady under a lamplight. It was all very exciting and bewildering to the young man who had no knowledge of what was in store for him.

Reality soon came crashing down and before he could ask, "where are the ATS quarters?", the recruits were ushered into a building and issued with a disgusting looking uniform, a ridiculous hat, large ugly boots and enough webbing to bridle a horse. In addition to an old Enfield 303 rifle, which looked like it dated back to the Boer war.



The new recruits were then herded into sleeping quarters with 25 steel frame beds lined up neatly on both sides, which would be their home for the next two months. There were no lockers for storing possessions, which would be superfluous anyway because everything the soldiers possessed, with the exception of what they were wearing during the day, was positioned on top of the beds in neat squares in a particular pattern - socks on the top left, underpants on the top right, small packs here, large packs there etc.

Most of the recruits were under the impression that someone with a nervous compulsive disorder was responsible for dreaming up the idea of displaying underwear and other personal items in a neat orderly sequence on top of the beds. Others considered it to be a fiendish scheme to save the army buying additional furniture.

In the evening the soldiers were granted special dispensation to remove the objects and use the beds for their intended purpose. One night when all the beds were free of the neat little adornments a trainee from another room entered and ran down the line of beds stepping from one to the other, which was quite funny, but lost on the trainees who were conscientiously shining their boots and polishing their badges and buckles.

The following night the same thing happened and the third night the man entered and repeated his act, only this time when he reached the seventh bed it collapsed and sent him crashing to the floor. The trainees, who were all waiting for this to happen, thought it was hilarious and fortunately the man wasn't hurt, with the exception of a few bruises. The trainees helped the man to his feet, reassembled the bed and this time locked the supports into position. From then on the exhibitionist's interest in slapstick was not apparent.



It didn't take the new recruits long to realize that the army had its own culture, which was imposed by the training instructors known as NCOs, standing for Non Commissioned Officers, who wore V-shaped white chevrons on their sleeves indicating their position in the hierarchy. These gentlemen who demanded respect, had exceptionally loud voices and showed very little tolerance for the trainees. They also displayed sour expressions on their faces, conveying the impression that they were not very happy with their chosen profession. In short they were graduates of charm school who had learned how to lose friends and alienate people. However to their credit, they were immaculately turned out in beautifully pressed uniforms, with brass buttons and buckles all shining and boots so highly polished, they resembled bright light bulbs. And they moved about the barracks with mechanical precision only

equalled by robots, which was a good example to some and amusement to others - It was military theatre at its best.

For the most part the training consisted of marching, shining boots, more marching, rifle drill, more shining boots, rifle practice, more marching, polishing brass buckles, buttons and badges, more shining boots, blanking webbing and more marching. The training also covered with clarity the appropriate reverence in the presence of officers.

There was little humour in all these activities except for a man by the name of Blockhead. All the trainees knew his name well, because at marching time the drill sergeant who was a typical kind hearted soul, used to call out, "don't swing your arms up and down both together - Blockhead".

Rifle drill in the early morning of November with thick frost on the parade ground and only a sweater covering the top portion of the body, was invigorating to say the least. The first few minutes before the exercises began was so cold that even the proverbial brass monkeys would be concerned about the family jewels. The drill sergeant, who had a questionable command of the English language, but an innate ability to communicate, would suggest things like, "Get fell in" and it was remarkable that everyone knew what he was talking about. He would also entertain them with amusing games involving word syllables, which the soldiers had to figure out and respond to.

The drill sergeant would utter in a loud reverberating voice, in case any of the recruits were hard of hearing: "Stannnd-attttt-ease, attennnnn-shun, quickkkkk-march, abouttttt-turn, companyyyyy-halt!" and when they had overstayed their welcome, he would say, "disssss-miss!" Private Blockhead also had difficulty understanding this new phenomenon, because his name was continually mentioned.

Target practice was Billy's nemesis and the heavy old Enfield rifle didn't help. They were told to hold the rifle butt as close to the shoulder as possible and the recoil practically dislocated his shoulder. Thinking he misunderstood the instructions and should hold it away from the shoulder, he fired the next round and almost broke a bone. From then on it felt like a large horse was kicking him in the shoulder every time he took a shot. The next day he could hardly lift his arm and was concerned about his social life, however it didn't present a problem, because they were confined to the barracks for the next two weeks. Whoever designed the Enfield 303 rifle obviously had a grudge against the British army and Billy decided that the best strategy for winning the next war would be to give all the Enfields to the enemy and let them immobilize themselves! They could then send in the bed straddler who would be so annoying that they would capitulate.



The training days went by without altercations with the exception of a lance corporal who took exception to something about Billy and satisfied his ego by ordering him to run around the playing field five times with the rifle over his head. The physical part was not a problem, but he felt silly and his pride was hurt. He also thought that the punishment was excessive, which didn't endear him to these authoritarian figures, who remained his adversaries

'Milling' was the only activity Billy enjoyed, because it was like boxing. However the ring and the gloves are where the similarity ends and everything else is different. The proceedings start with two individuals entering the ring from opposite sides and flailing away at each other for 2 minutes until the bell rings. The next 2 immediately enter and repeat the procedure, which carried on until everyone participates.

REMINISCE THIS

a little bit of nostalgia



Competitions between barrack rooms create a lot of excitement and there is no consideration for the size of the individuals, which can be unfortunate for the smaller men. Billy's opponent who was considerably larger than him entered the ring and charged with both hands flailing. He reached him part way across and Billy stepped to one side to avoid the oncoming locomotive. Propelled by momentum his opponent continued until he reached the ropes, then turned around and mustered an advance in the opposite direction. Billy instinctively stepped aside once again and his opponent continued as before, only this time he followed the confused attacker and when he turned around, he let him have it with

both barrels, before he could unleash another offensive.

The large lad having no defence against the onslaught, rolled up as best he could into a fetal position with his arms over his head and his knees bent, as if to say 'please don't hit me any more.' The Marquis of Queensbury rules state that punching is expected to continue unless the man receiving the punishment has one hand on the canvas.

Billy was not aware of the rules for 'Milling' if there are any and not wishing to let his team down and at the same time have mercy on his opponent, circled the lad, tapping him lightly on the top of his head with his gloves and calling out to him to put one hand on the canvas. The bell sounded and Billy was given the decision. A couple of the NCO trainers approached him afterwards with their congratulations, which may have helped him avoid trouble at this facility.

A number of the recruits attending the basic training course were college lads who were about 2 years older than the rest. They were a friendly interesting bunch despite the fact that they were potential officers. With the training drawing to a close, some of the college lads decided to organise a theatrical show for the staff, which would take place at the end of the course. They took responsibility for directing, producing, stage management and lighting, with a casting call going out for entertainers. One of the trainees from Billy's hometown agreed to play his drums if they could be transported to and from the barracks. To support the show and realising that weekend passes were in the offing; Billy suggested transporting the drum kit in his father's car, if he was allowed home to get them. Returning from the trip with the drums after enjoying a hard-earned weekend, he was saluted by the guards on entering the barracks. It should be noted that in those days few people owned cars and the guards obviously assumed that anyone entering the barracks with one had to be an officer. He appreciated the formal welcome back and responded with a little wave or a vertical finger - he couldn't remember which!

The drum kit assignment involved him with the show and as it progressed there appeared to be a shortage of performers. His imagination went to work and came up with an idea to help the situation by volunteering his services. He could be a comedian and involve another trainee if they considered his sketch worthy, he explained to the producer and director, who listened to his story and encouraged him to formulate his idea and recruit someone for the other part.

Show time commenced with the auditorium packed to capacity with the officers and their wives, including the CO in the front seats, followed by the staff NCOs and the trainees at the back.

When it was Billy's turn to perform, he was remarkably calm and stood in the front of the stage with an air of confidence. He knew he wasn't nervous, because he could see the audience clearly and was not averse to looking at them. He spoke in his best BBC manner, which he continued for the duration of the sketch, telling the audience that he would like to play some classical music on the piano...(pause) He then explained that he would like to if he knew how to play a piano.

That joke set the tone for the rest of the sketch, which went as follows: Seriously ladies and gentlemen, it would be a shame if you were denied an evening of classical music, simply because there are no instruments in this establishment. Without further ado and with complete disregard for convention, I would like to play my rendition of 'In a Monastery Garden.' Placing two fingers in his mouth, Billy whistled a reasonable version of the tune and when the appropriate time came, he broke out into bird imitations.

That was the signal for the stooge sitting unobserved in the back row to play his part, starting with a loud voice interrupting the whistler and announcing, 'that's a lot of cobblers!' The whole audience turned around to see what was happening, at which time the whistler stopped and called out to the heckler in an astonished voice, "what is that you said?" "It's a lot of rubbish," the heckler continued. "If you can do any better come up here on the stage," the whistler challenged, which was the signal for the stooge to walk from the back and climb up onto the stage. What the audience saw was a little man dressed in a civilian suit (the only one in the house) many times larger than his size. The shoulders had large padding and the loud jacket reached down to his knees. He wore white socks and a large coloured tie that almost touched the floor. The stage was set for the following dialogue: "What seems to be your problem young man?" asked the whistler, continuing the old BBC stuff. "That's a lot of nonsense," repeated the stooge.

This time the whistler ignored the remark and asked the stooge why he wasn't in the army and before the stooge could reply the whistler turned his head to the audience and announced with his hand covering his mouth from the stooge, "he doesn't know I am a recruitment officer!" To which the audience roared. "I don't know anything about all that marching about stuff." The stooge responded. "Come over here young man and allow me to bestow upon you the benefit of my considerable military experience," suggested the whistler.

As the stooge walked towards him, the whistler turned his head once again to the audience with his hand at the side of his mouth and announced, "I've got him going now!" To cut a long story short, the banter continued for about another 10 minutes until the stooge finally accepted the Queen's shilling, at which time the two comedians left the stage arm in arm. Billy would like to feel that he contributed to the success of the show, which according to the CO would have gone on tour had it not been for the fact that everyone was scheduled to be posted to different camps after Christmas.

On completion of the training, the recruits were given leave for Christmas and Billy enjoyed the company of his girl friend, who he had known for less than a year and was a couple of years older than him. She was an attractive girl with a model figure and a nice face; except that she wore so much make-up, he wasn't exactly sure what was underneath. Before the end of his leave she surprised him with an ultimatum; either marry me or else, and in the heat of the moment, so to speak, he agreed.

He didn't sleep well that night with concern that he didn't have enough money to even buy the marriage license, so he got up early and informed the anxious young lady that all bets were off. Finished, caput – no more!

Later he realised that his intended must have woken up her family that night to inform them of the forthcoming nuptials, because although he called it off early the following morning her big brother, who was previously one of his buddies was singularly unfriendly towards him from then on. Although he didn't feel that he had jilted her in the true sense of the word, the eventual showdown with the big brother would indicate otherwise and is another story!

Dejected by the loss of his true love and wishing to encourage the growth of his thinning hair, Billy had it all removed before returning to barracks. Consequently for a considerable period of time he was easily identifiable, attributing to a number of difficulties.



Sing For Your Supper

'Sing for your Supper' the sign said outside of the church as Billy was making his way back to Kempston barracks one evening at Christmas time in 1946. Hearing the sound of the congregation inside, the invitation was very tempting to the hungry young lad whose only concern was whether he could live up to his end of the bargain, considering that he couldn't sing a note in tune. His decision to enter however was supported by his conviction that the Lord would never turn away a hungry soul for singing off key and would surely forgive his shortcomings if he tried his best.

Middle age men dressed in shabby clothes were lined up inside the church singing away for all they were worth. It became obvious that the chorus were regulars and had sung there before, because there were no song sheets to read from and everyone appeared to know the words. Undaunted Billy joined the end of the line moving his lips in time to the music and eventually mumbling words, but mostly praying that he would not be denounced as an

imposter before suppertime.

After what felt like an eternity to the hungry lad, the singing eventually stopped and while still standing in a line, everyone received a slice of dry bread, which was immediately devoured by the congregation. 'These men must be famished,' Billy thought, resisting the temptation and deciding to save the bread to eat it with his hot supper. The dictionary definition of the word supper is: The evening meal especially when dinner is taken at midday.

Fortunately before the singing resumed Billy realized that he was the victim of misleading advertising and the slice of dry bread was the extent of the supper, which he considered to be a cruel hoax. Stuffing the bread into his mouth he made his weary way back to barracks, confused by the relationship of religion, catering and advertising.

Over the years Billy turned the wording of the sign over in his mind and couldn't get it to make any sense with out being misleading.

"Sing for a slice of dry bread"

"Free dry bread - singing optional"

"Free bread - eat in or take out"

"Sing for a slice - bread not pizza"

"Church exchanges bread for song"

"Leave a song, take a slice of bread"

Billy's Irish mother had a saying, "You wouldn't call out bad fish would you?" which loosely translated meant that all advertising has to sound good at the expense of the truth.

He learned the hard way that there is no such thing as a free lunch!

Yeovil



Having completed his basic training at Kempston Barracks in Bedfordshire, Billy arrived at Houndstone and Lufton camp in Yeovil, Somerset January 1947 to commence his Royal Army Service Corp, RASC training as a 'Driver Mechanic.' Before the training commenced Billy changed his mind and decided that he only wished to be a driver, because he couldn't come to terms with being in dirty overalls all the time.

Houndstone and Lufton camps were situated opposite each other in fields just outside of town with a country road running between the entrances. The driver training was conducted at Lufton; the smaller of the two and Houndstone provided the transit accommodation for incoming and outgoing troops, in addition to a cinema, a dance hall, a gymnasium, administration offices and a NAAFI (Navy, Army & Air-Force Institutes.) There was also a good size guardhouse staffed by 6 feet tall formidable looking Grenadier guards, who swaggered about the camp looking like elongated peacocks in season. This was the only army facility he was aware of, which was policed by guardsman, and it was a little disquieting.

The camps date back to 1925 when everything was under canvas and although considerable improvements were made since then, maintenance was not a priority and in 1947 the temporary buildings were in a serious state of disrepair. Lufton consisted of a small company office, a cookhouse and the other ranks living quarters, which was a large single story wooden condemned army hospital without hot running water. To prevent facial disfiguration, soldiers shaved in hot tea, which was plentiful from the cookhouse and was one of their few acceptable contributions.



The training, which mainly involved driving lorries, was a 6-week course which lasted three months, and that's how it was in the army! The extended period in the camp was the result of an unusual snowstorm, plus posting delays and a spot of leave. Our hero completed the driving part of it in about a week, because he already knew how to drive and the rest of the time was spent learning vehicle maintenance and goofing off -

REMINISCE THIS

a little bit of nostalgia

Volunteering for boxing was the smartest thing he ever did in the army, because it was the greatest farce imaginable. For two weeks the young athlete and his buddy were excused all duties and were left unsupervised to train for a boxing tournament. In the army's inimitable way, they provided the two pugilists a 10 X 10 room to train in with no boxing apparatus or other physical training equipment, just an empty room. Their clothing was not suitable for roadwork in the cold weather and with the exception of occasional calisthenics, walking to the NAAFI and playing cards was the extent of their training. Fortunately the tournament was eventually cancelled, which was a blessing, considering neither of them were in shape.

The most memorable event during this period was the 1947 snow blizzard, which paralyzed most of England and extended their stay in the camp. The snow came down unexpectedly and didn't stop for a week, depositing white stuff several feet deep with 10-foot high drifts. Most importantly the snow interfered with the training routine and the morning roll call on the parade ground became impossible.



Things were somewhat chaotic and confusion reigned for several days. Shovelling was the order of the day, regardless of the fact that suitable footwear was not available. Being averse to such activity, Billy with two of his friends, moved out of the assigned dormitory accommodation and found a small room in the same building. Removing the handle from the outside of the door so that no one could enter, they settled in for the duration of the storm. The unfortunates who shovelled as the snow descended couldn't keep up with the relentless downfall and the high wind drifts. Day after day it

came down unmercifully, making it difficult to even maintain a reasonable path from the billets to the cookhouse. Venturing out for tea and food when absolutely necessary, the trio would ascertain from the other soldiers that they were not being missed and the roll call was a thing of the past.

On rare excursions from their little hide away, they would observe mountainous snow piles in the vehicle parking area and still the lorries were unable to move, because the surrounding roads were impassable. Snow removing equipment was not in evidence and shovelling was the only defence against the onslaught.

It must be said that the troops contributed above and beyond the call of duty and deserved a special commendation - That and a shilling would probably get them a small pack of Woodbines!



The trio returned to their assigned billet after a number of days on hearing that all shovelling was discontinued with the exception of the important trail to the cookhouse. Another two days and the hostility was over, the snowfall ceased and it started to thaw. The mess in the camp as the snow melted was unimaginable and getting from one building to another was an accomplishment. The slush was so deep that mobility became an art and the camp resembled the old mining towns in the cowboy movies, with people paddling through knee high mud

to cross the street. Sir Galahad would have had a field day with the ATS girls! Always looking for the silver lining in the cloud, Billy welcomed the temporary discontinuation of polishing boots.

Attending the cinema at Houndstone camp was a memorable experience, with the place filled to capacity with soldiers and ATS girls. The film was about American gangsters, which was very popular at the time and featured Cornel Wild. Everyone was enjoying the Hollywood entertainment until Mr. Wild, who was playing the part of a detective, inquired of someone who was following him, "why are you shagging me?" and at that juncture the audience went into convulsions. Pandemonium broke out and to put it in the vernacular, "they went bonkers." This adolescent behaviour continued for the rest of the picture, making it impossible to hear another word spoken.

After completing the training course the soldiers were given leave before being posted to working units. Returning to the camp in the evening instead of the following morning, because of the train schedules, Billy arrived late and felt like a cup of tea. Not wishing to trudge through the mud to the NAAFI at Houndstone camp, Billy decided to try and charm one of the ATS girls in the cookhouse and before he could ask if a hot beverage was available for a weary traveller, a vision of a Samurai wrestler appeared in the form of a frazzled looking extra rotund ATS corporal, stopping him in his tracks.

"Come into my web," said the spider to the fly, leading Billy into the inner spud-bashing sanctum. It was a strange sort of room with only three walls, like a cubical and the potatoes were piled 6 feet high. He had never seen so many potatoes before in his life and was dumfounded with his predicament, which was his first introduction to military injustice. The Samurai handed him a knife and told him to go to work. "But I'm still on leave until tomorrow morning," protested the innocent optimist with a thirst for a cup of tea. "Start peeling those spuds or you'll be on a charge," the Samurai ordered as she waddled off, probably looking for another victim.

The disheartened young man, with no formal training in the culinary arts and even less aptitude, sat on a wooden box and peeled. The first thing he noticed after removing the skin and eyes from one of the large objectionable looking objects, was that very little of the original remained.

Now he knew why all those nasty eyes always appeared in the mashed potatoes, because if they were taken out, there wouldn't be enough mash to go around. He then pondered the reason why all the vegetables and meat were also unacceptable in the army and he knew it wasn't because they didn't have talented cooks, because it required a special kind of genius to consistently produce the same old slop continuously. He decided that the quality control had to be exceptionally good to prevent even a few decent meals slipping through. After contemplating the cookhouse food for a while, he looked down at the few potatoes he had massacred and calculated that it would take him the best part of three weeks to peel the rest. He then realised that the Samurai corporal didn't know him from Adam and he was gone.

Back in the Houndstone camp when the road conditions had improved Billy and his buddy waited in the transit area for a posting. Every morning the new graduates would be lined up in fours outside the billets and forced into hard labour around the camp to clean offices, latrines and all the other filthy jobs imaginable. A sergeant situated in front of the troops would call out groups such as the last four rows on the right, the two rows in the centre, the last four rows on the left and so on. NCOs then marched off these unhappy soldiers like chain gangs to their unpleasant duties. Every morning at least 20 fortunate soldiers were left standing and were free to pursue activities of their choice. Those with an aversion to menial tasks and a penchant for a challenge positioned themselves in the morning line up in a place they considered least likely to be called. It became a game, which wasn't easy, because the devious sergeant varied the sequence every morning. However it was fun and our hero would win as many times as he would lose. This activity reminded him of his father's advice that the army played a lot of 'silly buggers' and now he knew exactly what he meant. 'How did he get himself into this?' he kept asking himself, and the answer was always the same – 'Rudimentary my dear Watson, you reached the age of 18!'

Finally a posting to Germany came for the two friends, who were scheduled to assemble in the gym the following morning. That day at lunchtime, which was not unusual, the only thing Billy could eat was the dessert - a nice plum duff with raisins and sultanas. Afterwards while he was washing his mess-tins in the hot water tanks outside the cookhouse, he realised that he was still hungry and returned for another helping. Subsequently as he was washing his mess-tins for the second time a sergeant who probably recognised his exceptionally short hair accused him of eating two meals and had him arrested.

Two of the peacocks unceremoniously escorted him to the guardhouse, where he had been so many times before he thought it was part of the training. He was then advised that he would be formally charged the following morning.

That night as Billy was languishing in the cell with other birds of a feather, he related his predicament to driver Shaw, who volunteered his help. Shaw suggested that Billy inform the OC that he borrowed his used mess-tins outside the cookhouse and after cleaning them went in for lunch. Shaw said to tell him that the sergeant must have observed you cleaning them on both occasions and understandably assumed that you had two meals.

"But you were in the guard house when it happened," Billy responded. "That's ok," replied the co-conspirator, "I'll be out of here before you are marched in tomorrow morning and there are so many people coming and going in this place that these stupid gits will never figure it out."

T19104164 Driver Hawksford Sir", the accused advised after being marched in front of the OC by the CSM. The sergeant was then marched in and gave his testimony, before being dismissed. "What have you to say for yourself?" The OC asked. "Not guilty sir," came the smart reply. "Explain your self," suggested the OC, at which time the culprit went into his rehearsed recitation. "I can see Driver Shaw outside the guardhouse right now and he can verify my story," Billy exclaimed. The OC who had obviously been a boy scout, asked Billy in a fatherly manner if he could honestly say that he didn't have two meals. (As if anyone would admit to such a serious breach of the army commandments!) The accused, trying to avoid sounding sarcastic, replied in all sincerity that it was as much as he could do to eat one army meal a day. The OC deliberated for a minute and announced, "I will give you the benefit of the doubt young man – case dismissed." Unfortunately he never saw driver Shaw again and therefore couldn't thank him.



Free again, Billy immediately went to the gym to find out about the posting to Germany and was advised that he had been replaced with a substitute. The sergeant explained there were always additional names on the bottom of the posting list and if anyone didn't show up at roll call for any

reason a replacement was selected from the reserves. Fortunately Billy managed to bid his buddy farewell and waited his turn for the next posting.

With the knowledge of how the posting system worked Billy patiently awaited one to his liking. He would find out where the postings were going from a friend in the office and bide his time, which was another reason for his lengthy stay at Yeovil. Finally his name came up on a posting to Halifax and assuming it was in Nova Scotia Canada, reported to the gym and found himself in Halifax Yorkshire the following day.

At the gym while awaiting transportation Billy got into a penny game of three-card blind brag, started with a bunch of Scottish lads. Blind brag involves betting in rotation without seeing the cards until all the players drop out leaving only two. Eventually one decides to stop and see the other, with the best hand winning. The interesting part about this ridiculous game is that the players can look at their cards at any time, but if they decide to continue playing it costs them double from then on.

After the game was in progress for a while, unusual things started to happen, which was a new experience for Billy, who was weaned on gambling. While the betting was taking place some of the players' friends looked at their cards and signalled to them, and after a while almost all the players were being tipped off, to whether they had a good or a bad hand. This skull-duggery was conducted so amateurishly that he couldn't believe his eyes and had no alternative but to decide to withdraw from the game. However, while he was playing out his hand, one of the Scottish spectators who was known to the group, looked at all the hands and tapped him on the back.

Not knowing if the tap meant he had a good hand or a bad one, he was forced to look and pleased to see it was good. Now the question was whether he was being set up and someone else had a better hand, or whether the informer decided to be his partner. He had to play the hand to find out and indeed he had a partner. This arrangement was like betting on a fixed prize-fight with a bunch of crooks and he was the only one being advised who was going to win. If he didn't have the best hand he received two taps on the back and dropped out the game. This continued on until he had all the money, which was just over a pound and equal to a weeks pay in those days.

About 5 minutes after the game finished, when Billy returned to his original position in the gym, his Scottish partner came over and casually engaged him in small talk. Anticipating the visit he surreptitiously transferred a neatly folded 10 bob note while shaking hands, which concluded the discussion and dissolved the partnership. On reflection Billy reasoned that the scheming Scottish lads would never suspect one of their own tipping off an Englishman and they were probably so embroiled in their own unscrupulous activity that they couldn't see the forest for the trees. He was grateful for their contribution, in addition to the insight into people and gambling. Apparently high intrigue is not confined to large amounts of money and one has never finished learning!

EXCUSED BOOTS

Out of genuine respect for the hardworking friendly warm people of Yorkshire, Billy sincerely hopes that his observations of Halifax will not be offensive.

The scene at the Halifax RASC camp in 1947, which was located at Ovenden Park a few miles north of the town, was like a really old black and white movie, completely devoid of colour. The soot from the nearby industry blanketed the whole area and everything including the hills overlooking the camp and the grass in the park, were the same muddy grey colour. The dark stonewalls separating the fields contributed to the stark scene and the dampness from the fine misty drizzle penetrated his bones. It was the winter of Billy's discontent.

On the first weekend he couldn't wait to get away from the camp and decided to investigate the town. He had no appreciation for the old magnificent architecture and was totally unimpressed with his new surroundings. To add to his disillusionment he returned through a heavy industrial area, which looked like Dante's Inferno. The factories and foundries responsible for the discoloration of the area were in full swing, with fire and sparks blazing away and chimneys belching out black smoke. Large pieces of iron and steel of all descriptions lay around the landscape waiting their turn in the ovens and the whole place resembled a huge untidy noisy junkyard. He had never seen anything so unsightly and was appalled.

REMINISCE THIS

a little bit of nostalgia

Back at the miserable camp he was determined to make the best of his situation and settled into the new billet, which was a concrete single story structure with holes intended for a door and windows. No carpet, no furniture, no sheets, no pillowcases or pillows and only a pot-bellied stove for comfort. Furniture did appear in the billet one day when the general was expected to visit and was returned to storage forthwith. The soldiers committed no crimes justifying these pitiful conditions resembling the dark ages and it's amazing how low the acceptable standards for other ranks were in those days. What on earth did he do to deserve this place he asked himself - He had committed no crime, which was discovered. And then he remembered that it was his own entire fault for scheming the posting to Halifax, assuming it was in Nova Scotia.



Rather than curse the darkness he decided to make the best of a bad situation and investigated the local amenities. Within a stones throw of the camp there was 'The Ivy House' pub and a small general store where he would purchase fags one at a time for 1 or 2 pennies when he was broke. There was also a NAAFI, inside the camp which was a one-room arrangement with bare tables and chairs and wooden hatches separating

the servers from the recipients of the tea and wads – The hatches were specially designed to prevent the soldiers from seeing the female face behind the voice and was an effective obstacle to fraternisation. The ladies were occasionally observed outside the NAAFI building and in addition to a reputation for not being raving beauties; many of them were old enough to be grand mothers and few soldiers attempted to date an unseen face behind the hatch. The only other place with a potential for making whoopee was the cookhouse, which had a wooden floor and doubled as a dance hall on occasions - Paradise Island it was not!

Billy always suffered from 'Athlete's Foot', which was getting progressively worse, probably as a result of the primitive hygienic conditions at the camp. Having a mind that was always attuned to opportunities he decided to try and turn this unfortunate medical condition into an advantage. He then started walking as much as possible and purposely not changing his socks for days. He went to the first dance at the camp where three soldiers and two girls sat around looking at each other while a gramophone churned out old-fashioned music. He ingratiated himself to the lesser of the two evils and danced the night away, walking the young lady home to exacerbate the condition of his feet..

Reporting to the medical office the following morning with an exaggerated hobble the invalid presented his bleeding toes which were a horrible sight resembling raw meat ready for the grill. He had to plead his case to a medical orderly, because it was the doctor's day off and he wondered if he had suffered all this discomfort for nothing. The challenge now was to convince the medical orderly to do his bidding and with the best-anguished looking face he could contrive, he explained that this problem never existed until he started to wear boots. In actuality although the boots were not ideal for dancing they were quite comfortable and really practical for army life, but he just didn't like the look of them and also didn't like wearing gaiters. He pleaded with the orderly to give him something to relieve the pain and also excuse him from the offending footwear.

It was his lucky day because the medical orderly also suffered from Athlete's Foot, but admitted that he had never suffered as badly as Billy, - who knew exactly why! The orderly was very sympathetic and prescribed the best he could, which was to provide him with powder, suggest he change his socks

as often as possible and keep his feet dry. The orderly told him that the doctor signs everything he places in front of him and he would make out the necessary paperwork for excused boots and tuck it in the pile for the doctor the following day.



Billy was delighted when he was subsequently handed the signed piece of paper officially declaring that he was excused boots. And so with the first smile on his face since he entered the camp, he immediately presented the paper to the Quarter Master Sergeant who exchanged his boots and gaiters for a nice pair of shoes. Billy felt like he had accomplished something really important.

No more boning big unsightly boots and no more baggy trousers from the gaiters. Billy was hoping that he would also be excused from guard duty, because he wouldn't be properly dressed – But no such luck even though he looked a little out of place in his shoes. The strangest thing is that the whole time he was in the army he was never challenged to produce the paper showing he was excused boots. Had he known that he would have ditched the boots a long time before!

The next time Billy was on vehicle guard duty, he was standing on the pathway leading to the NAAFI in the afternoon, when a girl carrying two shopping bags approached from the main gate. "Halt! Who goes there?," he commanded in his best military tone, recalled from one of the old movies. "Joyce from the NAAFI" came the reply. "Step forward and be recognized," he ordered and Joyce complied in the spirit of the occasion. This was the first time he had set eyes on a NAAFI girl and he was delighted to see that she didn't have horns.

She was in fact quite young and not altogether unattractive, so he carried her bags to the NAAFI and made arrangements to meet her at 11.10 pm that evening.

Instead of drinking tea and sitting around the potbelly stove with the other lads after being relieved at 11 pm, he quietly opened a back window in the guardhouse and crawled out. True to her word the girl was waiting at the back door to the NAAFI and the courting couple strolled around the camp getting to know one another. That night the temperature dropped drastically forcing the couple to find shelter to keep warm. The only place they could find was an empty billet, exactly the same as the type he was assigned to, with holes where the door and windows should be. They stood in a corner holding each other closely in an attempt to keep warm and further their relationship, but it was to no avail, because the building offered no respite from the bitter cold. Finally Billy reluctantly escorted the girl back to the NAAFI, climbed back in the guardhouse window and took a place around the potbellied stove with a mug of hot tea. He never thought it possible that he would ever be pleased to be in a guardhouse and his existence was starting to resemble a nightmare.

Billy returned to Halifax in 1992 and would you believe it was still drizzling when he entered Overton Park. However he was astonished to find that the industry no longer existed and the hillside and parks having been washed for many years by the rain were now as green as grass should be! The camp was demolished and abandoned in the 50s and only concrete bases of the buildings remain as evidence of the past.

The area is still a park where people walk their dogs and The Ivy House and the small store were still there. Billy was tempted to enter the store and ask for a woodbine, but thought better of it. The buildings around the park and in the town are still the same grey colour, which is typical of Yorkshire

and it's any ones guess why!

An ex-Yorkshire man now living in New Zealand advise Billy that after the heavy industry closed down in the 60s and 70s and the chimneys stopped pouring out smoke, the black sheep up on the moors were revealed to be white. The soot had discoloured their fleece.

The ex-soldier soaked up some of the more pleasant history of Halifax in the nearby Imperial Hotel, which dates back to the 1800s and enjoyed a splendid meal in the hotel's Wallis Simpson restaurant. A far cry, but only a stone's throw from the camp at Ovenden Park, which was the low point of his army service and a long time ago.

•Note: In 1771 Lt. Governor Michael Franklin of Nova Scotia travelled to northern England to seek immigrants. He was looking for skilled farmers who could take up lands formally cultivated by the displaced Acadian minority, and who could counterbalance growing republican sentiment within both Nova Scotia and the Colonies to the south. For five years, until the British Government began to grow alarmed at the scale of emigration to North America, agents actively recruited settlers in Yorkshire.

•The first of these Yorkshire emigrants arrived in 1772 aboard the Duke of York. This vessel departed Liverpool on March 16, 1772 with 62 passengers, and reached Fort Cumberland on May 21, 1772. On board were Charles Dixon, Thomas Anderson, George Bulmer, John Trenholm and others. During the period 1773-1775 additional vessels left for Nova Scotia, the largest number arriving during the spring of 1774, when 9 ships carried settlers from England to Halifax. In all, more than 1,000 people emigrated from Yorkshire.

DARKNESS

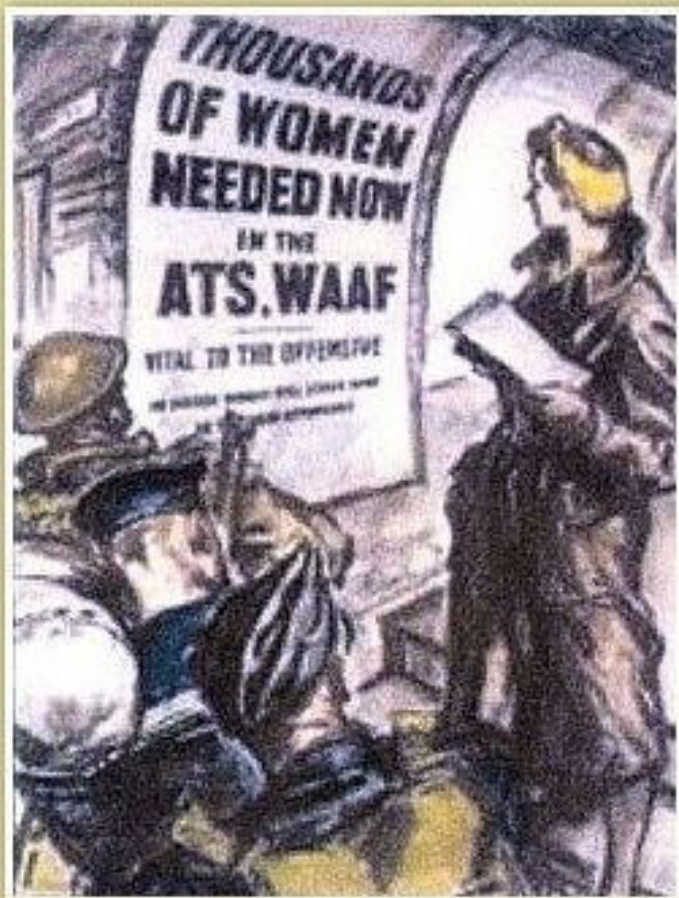
Life is stranger than fiction, especially in the darkness, which is a great equalizer and levels the playing field, so to speak. It's said that we are all the same upside down, which can also apply in the dark. Back in 1947 in Yorkshire, Billy the British soldier was being transported to a new camp in the back of a lorry with his full kit and a number of other unfortunate men in uniform. It was a three-hour journey from Halifax to the Drax area and not only night-time, but also one of those very dark nights when the visibility was almost zero with out a light. The ride was very uncomfortable, because the hard floor was numbing his posterior and every time the lorry hit a bump in the road, everyone and everything in the back became airborne with the backpacks and kit-bags jumping all over the place. The back of the lorry was covered with a tarpaulin, with the exception of the area over the tailgate, where the men could gaze out and see absolutely nothing.

A few miles into the journey the lorry stopped, the tailgate was lowered and a bunch of ATS (Auxiliary Territorial Service) girls piled in. It was too dark to authenticate that they were actually ATS, but there was no question that they were female. These ladies climbed their way through the soldiers and kit-bags and made themselves comfortable in the back of the lorry, as the tailgate came up and the vehicle continued. There was a girl seated next to our hero by the tailgate and not wishing to be anti-social, he engaged her in chitchat, or chatted her up, whichever expression you prefer. The scene was like a black and white movie without the white and an intriguing situation to say the least.

Further down the road it started to rain and on this particular evening it came lashing down and entered the area above the tailgate, prompting the chivalrous one to open his groundsheet and cover the girl and him. The girl did not object and was thankful for the gentleman's protection, evidenced by the closeness in the confined quarters - The rain continued and they got closer.

The closer they got the warmer they became and less clothing was required. It wasn't easy for them in the darkness, but they displayed exceptional fortitude. They were like erotic magnets with hearts pounding as they remained beneath the surface and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation was in order to compensate for the lack of oxygen. After lip locking for a period of time the amorous one was curious

to learn more about his silent companion and using the only method available to him in the darkness, ascertained that the lady was considerably larger than he had hoped.



Realising that this entanglement - and the word entanglement is used advisedly, would most likely be of short duration and probably less than 20 minutes, he justified the continuation of the activity with the rotund one based on the theory that it would adversely affect his health if he denied her the comfort she deserved. In the tactile world of darkness where imagination, perception, creativity and innovation are so important, the natural senses become more acute and excited with emotion. In the heat of the moment they were completely oblivious to the kit-bags rolling around, the continuous rain outside and the bumping of the vehicle actually added to their pleasure. Closer and closer they became in the darkness without a thought to what their respective companion looked like or even exchanging names. It was an exceptional display of uncontrolled abandonment.

The true meaning of the word dexterity can only be understood after trying to retrieve something from the back pocket of a pair of trousers, while wearing an overcoat in confined quarters, tangled up with a healthy ATS girl in the back of an army lorry in the darkness. Had they got any

closer they would have to be peeled apart and it was comforting to know that a plea of mistaken identity would be plausible under the circumstances. It was like a nocturnal fantasy, which appears unbelievably real.

But as the vehicle came to a screeching halt at the destination, propelling the baggage all over the occupants in the back of the lorry, the romantic one was awoken from his slumber and wicked delight. Although the entanglement with the ATS girl was real, part of the story was a dream after the girls departed earlier on. Billy can no longer differentiate between the fantasy and the reality and quite honestly, he prefers it that way!

The tailgate came down and an NCO shouted, "Everybody out!" prompting the weary soldiers who were half asleep to collect their thoughts and search for their baggage. With backpacks, kit-bags and rifles in tow, the travellers shuffled along through the darkness to the usual austere billets and settled in for another fun night in the British Army. Needless to say that no one thought of feeding the poor buggers!

"It is better to light one small candle, than curse the darkness."---*Confucius*.

Billy's Bag - Doing My National Service is continued on page 38

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THE 1950s



The ascent of the 1950's saw a Britain struggling to rebuild and redefine its place in a world irrevocably altered by the cataclysmic events of the Second World War. The initial flush of victorious jubilation swiftly receded during the early years of the decade and the nation found itself slowly cloaked in a subdued mood of colourless sobriety as thick, cloying and grey as the notorious smog, which lent post war London an almost Dickensian air of health destroying, vitality sapping, gloom.

As if in a futile effort to turn the clock back to the lost certainty of the pre-war years, 1951 saw Labour leader Clement Attlee ousted from office, to be replaced by the aging lion, the then 77 year old Winston Churchill. But even the re-emergence of the legendary old warhorse and the ensuing reversal of many of the social reforms instigated under the departed Labour government, were mere futile attempts to revive a status quo whose time had passed. Long entrenched attitudes were in the throes of upheaval, and a once mighty empire was beginning to

crack and fragment as a result.

The Coronation of the new Queen on 2nd June 1953, following the untimely death in February of the previous year of her father, the much loved George VI, was proclaimed joyously as the beginning of a glorious new "Elizabethan Age" for the nation. A sentiment that further served to reinforce the spectacular Festival of Britain held on London's South Bank between May and September 1951, and which had sought to evoke the same sense of national pride and technological enlightenment and superiority engendered at the pinnacle of Victorian Britain's imperial power with the Great Exhibition.

By the middle of the decade Hilary and Tensing had conquered Everest, Watson and Crick had unlocked the structure of DNA and Churchill had been knighted. Against this backdrop a new -alien to the more traditional elements of the establishment, social force was coming to the fore. With important seaports such as Liverpool providing a gateway from the US, the raw, vital and exciting music of Rock n' Roll galvanised the nation's experience-hungry youth. Empowered by an awakening sense of their collective identity, 'youth culture' was born, and the ripples of its impact upon the country would prove to be profound.

As the decade moved inexorably into its final phase, while steadfast traditionalists fought an increasingly futile and desperate battle to preserve their vision of the nation, the leaks in the dam holding back change grew evermore numerous and uncontrollable. The surreal and inspired lunacy of the Goons perplexed and convulsed radio listeners in their millions, while the safe and cosy world of the theatre was rocked by an intense young playwright named John Osborne, who extolled audiences to "Look Back in Anger", and in the process gave a powerful voice to a still painfully emerging generation.

At decade's end Great Britain had finally all but dispelled the clouds of uncertainty and inertia which had hung over the country at the beginning of the 50's. The country and its people now looked to the immediate future with a renewed sense of optimism and expectation. Change was in the air. But just how explosive and far reaching a change awaited them just over the horizon, not even the most foresighted amongst them could have dared imagine.

ICONS of the 1950s



HAROLD MACMILLAN nicknamed 'Supermac' known for his pragmatism, wit and unflappability, was Conservative Prime Minister of Britain from 1957 to 1963. Haunted by memories of the Great Depression, he championed a strategy of public investment to maintain demand, winning a second term in 1959 on an electioneering budget. Benefiting from favourable international conditions, he presided over an age of affluence, marked by low unemployment and high growth. In his Bedford speech of July 1957 he told the nation they had 'never had it so good.'



TONY HANCOCK His hugely successful radio series was transferred to television in 1956 and was an unparalleled success. 'The Lad Himself' had the ability to empty pubs, clubs and theatres on the nights that his shows were broadcast. A complicated and insecure character in real life he gradually divested himself of all the elements of his success one by one; his radio and TV partner Sid James and finally, and fatefully his scriptwriters Ray Galton and Alan Simpson. In the 1960s having never achieved the true international fame he desired, Hancock took his own life in a hotel room in Australia.



TOMMY STEELE the Bermondsey born entertainer was performing in the famous The 2i's Coffee Bar in London's Soho when he was discovered by a freelance photographer who believed Tommy could be Britain's answer to Elvis Presley. He quickly shot to fame in the UK after his first single, "Rock With The Caveman," reached number 13 in 1956. His next three singles were issued at a rate of one every three weeks and by 1957 he was able to buy his parents a four-bedroomed house. Movies and theatre followed including a role on Broadway. In late 2009 his greatest hits collection reached the Top 40 in the UK Albums Chart.



NORMAN WISDOM best known for a series of comedy films produced between 1953 and 1966 featuring his hapless onscreen character Norman Pitkin, Norman's films initially made more money than the James Bond film series and secured him celebrity status in lands as far apart as South America, Iran and many Eastern Bloc countries, particularly in Albania where he was the only Western actor to enjoy this privilege. Charlie Chaplin famously referred to Wisdom as his "favourite clown".



THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD enthralled a generation of children and spawned a number of imitations such as The Adventures of Sir Lancelot, Sir Francis Drake and The Adventures of William Tell. The series was also significant in being the first commissioned programme for the new independent television company ITC. Richard Greene starred as the legendary 12th century outlaw who robbed from the rich and gave to the poor and for television audiences of the 1950's, his incarnation of the legendary hero proved to be the definitive portrayal.

ICONS of the 1950s



DIANA DORS was promoted as "The English Marilyn Monroe" and became the quintessential 1950s blonde bombshell, English style. She was described as "The only sex symbol Britain has produced since Lady Godiva." Dors was much more than a sex symbol, though, and continued to work long after her sex-symbol appeal had gone. On May 4th 1984 this much-loved British actress passed away at the youthful age of 53. A tribute to Diana Dors, "Good Day", written after her death by Ray Davies, is included on the Kinks Word Of Mouth album.



DONALD CAMPBELL was a British speed record breaker who broke eight world speed records in the 1950s and 1960s. He remains the only person to set both world land and water speed records in the same year. The son of Sir Malcolm Campbell, holder of 13 world speed records in the famous Bluebird cars and boats, Campbell began his speed record attempts using his father's old boat Bluebird K4, but after a structural failure at 170 mph on Coniston Water, Lancashire in 1951, he developed a new boat and broke his first world water speed record in 1955.



TOMMY TRINDER was a fast-talking and quick-witted stand up comedian. His catch phrases, 'You lucky people!' and 'If it's laughter you're after, Trinder's the name', combined with his trademark trilby hat, leering smile and wagging finger were recognised throughout Britain. In 1955, he became the first compere for the new ITV television programme Sunday Night at the London Palladium. Trinder was a lifelong devoted supporter of Fulham Football Club and was chairman of the club between 1959 and 1976. Always a favourite with the Royal family (he made six appearances in Royal Variety Performances between 1945 and 1980), he was awarded a CBE in 1975.



ROGER BANNISTER became the first person in history to run a mile in under 4 minutes. This happened on 6 May 1954 during a meet between British AAA and Oxford University at Iffley Road Track in Oxford. Two other runners, Brasher and Chataway, provided pacing while completing the race. Both went on to establish their own track careers. The race was broadcast live by BBC Radio and commented on by Harold Abrahams, of Chariots of Fire fame. The stadium announcer for the race was Norris McWhirter, who went on to publish and edit the Guinness Book of Records.



THE BEVERLEY SISTERS signed a recording contract with Columbia Records in 1951 that helped them become the highest paid female act in the UK. They were the first British female group to break into the US top 10 and enjoyed chart success with Christmas records like Little Drummer Boy and I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus and were at the forefront of the television revolution. Joy married Billy Wright, then captain of the England football team, in 1958 and they were the 'Posh' and 'Becks' of the day.

ICONS of the 1950s



MR. PASTRY was one of the first exponents of children's TV comedy when it was still in its infancy in the early fifties. The comedic creation of actor/acrobat/dancer/producer and writer Richard Hearne, Pastry was a madcap, bowler-hatted clown complete with walrus moustache and flapping coat-tails. His act first appeared on the US Ed Sullivan Show in 1954, and thereafter Hearne appeared on the show frequently. In 1963 Hearne became President of the Lord's Taverners charity and he subsequently raised money for hundreds of hydrotherapy pools. In 1970 he was awarded the OBE for his charitable work.



TERRY-THOMAS was a distinctive English comic actor. He was famous for his portrayal of disreputable members of the upper classes, especially cads, with the trademark gap in his front teeth, cigarette holder, smoking jacket, and catch-phrases such as "Good show!" and "Hard cheese." It was the Boultings who encouraged Terry-Thomas to develop a screen persona, as the blustering Major Hitchcock in *Private's Progress* (1956) and its sequel *I'm All Right Jack* (1959), whose exasperated harangue, "You're an absolute shower!" became a national catch-phrase.



LONNIE DONEGAN had possibly the largest influence on generations of British musicians. The Guinness Book of British Hit Singles & Albums states Donegan was "Britain's most successful and influential recording artist before The Beatles" chalking up 24 successive Top 30 hits, and the first UK male to score two U.S. Top 10s. With a washboard, a tea-chest bass and a cheap Spanish guitar, Donegan entertained audiences with folk and blues songs. Encouraged amateurs made their own home-made musical instruments, and one of the many skiffle groups that followed was The Quarrymen formed in March 1957 by John Lennon.



BILLY BUNTER was an oversized schoolboy who attended Greyfriars School and often got involved in a number of comic misadventures. The TV shows were performed live twice a night from 1952 to 1961 and made a star of lead actor Gerald Campion (who was 29 at the time), but not as big a star as one of his schoolboy tormentors, namely, Michael Crawford. The series gave rise to two catchphrases; "Yaroo" and "Oh, Crikey!" Well, it was the fifties!



RUTH ELLIS was the last woman to be executed in the United Kingdom. She was convicted of the murder of her lover, David Blakely, and hanged at Holloway Prison, London, by Albert Pierrepoint in July 1955. The case caused widespread controversy at the time, evoking exceptionally intense press and public interest to the point that it was discussed by the Cabinet. A petition to the Home Office asking for clemency was signed by 50,000 people, but was rejected. The hanging helped strengthen public support for the abolition of the death penalty.

ICONS of the 1950s



BILLY WRIGHT was the first football player in the world to earn 100 caps, Wright also holds the record for longest unbroken run in competitive international football; he made a total of 105 appearances for England, captaining them a record 90 times. Wright was a minor media personality, and his marriage to Joy Beverley of the Beverley Sisters (at a time long before the era of footballers being known for having celebrity girlfriends) was one of the most successful showbiz marriages.



DAN DARE created by illustrator Frank Hampson, appeared in the Eagle comic story Dan Dare, Pilot of the Future in 1950. The stories were set in the late 1990s but the dialogue and manner of the characters is reminiscent of British war films of the 1950s. Characters inspired by or based on Dan Dare have appeared throughout British popular culture. Dare and his arch-nemesis the Mekon enjoyed enormous popularity due in the most part to the groundbreaking full-colour animation-style illustrations produced by Frank Hampson and his team of artists, the likes of which had never been seen in a weekly publication in Britain before.



ANDY PANDY was first seen in 1950 as part of the children's television strand Watch With Mother. Andy Pandy, with his blue and white striped suit and floppy hat, was the creation of schoolteacher Maria Bird. The first four episodes were shown purely as an experiment, after which the corporation invited viewers to express their opinion before going into full production with a series. The puppet lived in a picnic basket and was accompanied by Teddy and Looby Loo.



STANLEY MATTHEWS often regarded as one of the greatest players of the English game, is the only player to have been knighted while still playing, as well as being the first winner of both the European Footballer of the Year and the Football Writers' Association Footballer of the Year awards. Matthews' nicknames included The Wizard of the Dribble and The Magician. A vegetarian teetotaler, he kept fit enough to play at the top level until he was 50 years old. The 1953 FA Cup Final, for which he won a winners medal is referred to as 'The Matthews Final.'



THE GOON SHOW was a British radio show that started in 1951 and ran until 1960. It changed the face of British comedy and still maintains its influence to this day. The Goons, who included Spike Milligan, Peter Sellers and Harry Secombe took Britain by storm with their surreal storylines, absurd logic, puns, catchphrases and groundbreaking sound effects. More than seventy years on episodes are still repeated around the world.

BRITISH FILMS of the 1950s

The Top 100 British Films of the 20th Century was produced by the British Film Institute in 1999. Over 27,000 votes were cast from people throughout the film industry - among them; actors, directors, producers, distributors and critics. The list was eventually published on the BFI website. Below are the films of the 1950s in the order of the year of release with their original position in the top 100.



THE LAVENDER HILL MOB 1951 - Writer T.E.B. Clarke and director Charles Crichton's inventive, carefully observed Academy Award nominated black comedy about a meek bank clerk who oversees the shipment of bullion, remains perhaps the quintessential example of Ealing's comedy output at its classic peak. Memorable characters, consummate performances and an overriding air of sheer, unadulterated class indelibly mark's this film out as one of 'the' all time great comedy classics.

Voted 17th best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.



THE MAN IN THE WHITE SUIT 1951 - Writers Roger MacDougall, John Dighton and writer-director Alexander MacKendick combine their not inconsiderable talents for a brilliantly realised combination of farce and social satire which marked yet another highpoint for both star Alec Guinness and the Ealing stable. A chemist invents a fabric that resists wear and stain but wealthy mill owners want it suppressed for economic reasons.

58th best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.



THE CRUEL SEA 1953 - Adapted from Nicolas Monsarrat's best selling novel by Eric Ambler and directed by Charles Frend, the stark story of the lives and experiences of a World War Two Atlantic based corvette crew hauntingly illustrates the sheer hopelessness and erosion of humanity caused by the circumstances of war. The inimitable Jack Hawkins radiates innate dignity, despair and effortless authority in the crucial central role.

75th best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.



GENEVIEVE 1953 - Writer William Rose and director Henry Cornelius weave a warm and endearingly good-natured blanket of gentle humour around the slight tale of friendly rivalry between two friends and the women in their lives during a vintage car rally. Cast and script sparkle, while Larry Adler's jauntily infectious harmonica score is the perfect topping to a much-loved confection.

86th best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.

BRITISH FILMS of the 1950s



THE BELLES OF ST. TRINIAN'S 1954 - Writer-director Frank Launder, partner Sidney Gilliat and co-writer Val Valentine bring cartoonist Ronald Searl's monstrous schoolgirl minxes to bright and cheerful life, aided and abetted by the wonderful Alastair Sim leading an adult cast comprising of some of Britain's finest comedy character actors (including Gerge Cole). Infinitely superior to the sequels which followed.

94th best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.



THE DAM BUSTERS 1954 - Written by R.C. Sheriff from the books by Guy Gibson and Paul Brickhill and directed by Michael Anderson, the true story of the daring air raid that lead to the destruction of the mighty Ruhr dams by the innovative 'bouncing bombs', remains one of British cinema's best and most excitingly recreated accounts of an actual World War Two event. Michael Redgrave's slightly absent-minded Barnes Wallace is perhaps a shade too understated, but Richard Todd's Guy Gibson is wonderfully commanding.

68th best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.



THE LADY KILLERS 1955 - Writer William Rose and director Alexander MacKendrick's acutely funny black comedy is a genuinely high-water mark even by Ealing's prestigious standards. Cast and crew mesh seamlessly to produce a truly outstanding landmark of unashamedly British cinematic comedy in which five diverse oddball criminals, planning a bank robbery rent rooms from an octogenarian widow under the pretext that they are classical musicians.

13th best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.



REACH FOR THE SKY 1956 - Written and directed by Lewis Gilbert, the story of World War Two fighter pilot Douglas Bader's inspirational personal battle to return to active combat duty following the loss of his legs is presented with a stiff upper lipped sincerity laced with a healthy dose of understated humour that does full credit to an extraordinary act of real life courage and single-minded determination. Kenneth Moore delivers a career best performance of genuine warmth.

78th best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.

BRITISH FILMS of the 1950s



THE BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI 1957 - David Lean directed epic story of British POWs in Burma forced to build a bridge for their Japanese captors, becomes an epic examination of obsession, misplaced honour and the ability of war to shatter even the strongest person's sanity. Alec Guinness delivers an intensely impressive and effortlessly dominant performance.

11th best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.



ROOM AT THE TOP 1958 - Adapted from John Braine's industrial North set kitchen sink novel by Neil Patterson and directed by Jack Clayton, the story of a ruthlessly social climbing clerk was a stark landmark in the realistic depiction of sex and social envy for British cinema of the time. Amongst a first rate cast, sultry French star Simone Signoret makes an especially memorable impression.

32nd best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.



PEEPING TOM 1959 - Written by Leo Marks and directed by Michael Powell, this dark, disturbing and convincingly performed examination into the disturbed mind of a young voyeuristic killer is an ahead of its time exercise in unsettling suspense which lingers in the memory long past its initial viewing.

78th best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.



I'M ALRIGHT JACK 1959 - Written by Frank Harvey and John Boulting from the novel "Private Life" by Alan Hackney and directed by Roy Boulting, this wide ranging and at times biting sharp and funny satire about a wide-eyed innocent who unwittingly causes a nationwide strike, targets class, corruption and working life in 50s Britain with an unerring accuracy and bright, knowing and intelligent wit. Ian Carmichael shines as the innocent, but it's Peter Sellers who steals the film.

47th best British film of all time in the BFI's top 100.

TELEVISION CLASSICS of the 1950s



DIXON OF DOCK GREEN

Jack Warner first played Dixon in the 1949 Rank movie, 'The Blue Lamp,' in which he was gunned down by armed robber Dirk Bogarde. His creator, Ted Willis, resurrected him six years later as a replacement for the BBC series 'Fabian of the Yard.' Willis spent a number of weeks researching at Paddington Green station, where he 'recruited' some 250 officers to provide him with anecdotes, until he finally placed Dixon at London's fictitious Dock Green police station, where he became a permanent fixture for the next 21 years, making the series the longest running police show in British TV history. Willis created a cosy, non-violent image around George Dixon, episodes began and ended with a monologue to camera beneath the police stations blue lamp, with a moralistic message that crime doesn't pay, before old George would disappear into the night whistling 'Maybe It's Because I'm A

Londoner'.

George was eventually promoted to 'Desk Sergeant' and new, younger characters, such as Detective Sgt Andy Crawford came to the fore. With his promotion George rarely strayed beyond the station's front doors, and indeed, the last few years of the series saw him preparing for retirement, not surprisingly as Warner was now 80 years of age. Jack Warner died 5 years after the series finished, and in tribute to him his coffin was borne by officers of Paddington Green Police Station, as the shows theme 'An Ordinary Copper' was played over a PA. It was not just Jack Warner who was buried that day, it was an entire age of innocence, where the good guys upheld simple, traditional values and the bad guys came quietly. More than a quaintly old fashioned and reassuring television series came to an end when George Dixon went off duty for the final time, a doorway to an old way of life was closed and firmly bolted forever.



THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD

Richard Greene starred as the legendary 12th century outlaw who robbed from the rich and gave to the poor. Robin of Locksley, the Earl of Huntingdon, was forced to rebel against the cruel Prince John (Hubert Gregg, Brian Haines and most famously -Donald Pleasence) and his local henchman, the Sheriff of Nottingham (Alan Wheatley). Ably abetted by his traditional band of Merry Men, Little John, Friar Tuck, Will Scarlett (Ronald Howard, later replaced by Paul Eddington who would go on to find fame in The Good Life and Yes Minister), and Alan-a-Dale. The series was one of the first British shows to be purchased by an American TV company where it was also a big success.

Robin Hood enthralled a generation of children and spawned a number of imitations such as The Adventures of Sir Lancelot, Sir Francis Drake and The Adventures of William Tell. Terence Fisher,

Don Chaffey and Ralph Smart were among the directors, and the theme song was a hit in 1956 for Dick James, who also went on to become a world famous music publisher with his DJM company publishing the songs of The Beatles and Elton John.

TELEVISION CLASSICS of the 1950s



THE CORONATION OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II

In most parts of the country, in the towns and the cities, streets were deserted on the morning of Coronation Day, 2 June 1953. In residential quarters and in suburbs groups of cars were parked in the silent roads. They stood outside houses where the H ariel of TV had drawn neighbours and friends inside to take part in what became, as each hour passed, the greatest day yet in the history of television's short and remarkable history. That day the TV audience, for the first time, was almost double the radio audience. Of the adult population of Britain, numbering around 36,500,000, nearly twenty-

and-a-half million watched the Coronation on television. More than half the viewers all over the country watched in the homes of friends, about a million and a half watched big-screen relays in cinemas and other public places. Two hundred children, in Great Ormond Street Hospital in London, watched in colour as closed circuit pictures were transmitted from three TV colour cameras overlooking Parliament Square.

In the two months preceding the Coronation more TV sets were bought than in any other two months. At least two and a half million sets were in use-giving TV in 1953 a family audience of about 8 million people. On 2 June, 1953, TV unleashed a binding power through the nation, the significance of which to national life proved to be immensely and historically important.



THE QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT

The summer of 1953 had seen the BBC's then new head of drama Michael Barry allocates his entire first year's budget for new scripts - the princely sum of £250 - on a single author, a young staff writer (and winner of the 1950 Somerset Maugham Prize for Literature), named Nigel Kneale. The scripts ultimately delivered by Kneale were for an imaginative, atmospheric, and innovative six-part science fiction thriller very much different from the

somewhat staid, theatrical productions that at the time were very much the standard template for the BBC's television drama output. Kneale's dark and disturbing story was basically woven around a simple but highly effective framework. The Quatermass Experiment told the tale Professor Bernard Quatermass (Reginald Tate), head of the British Rocket Research Group, and the deadly after effects which arise when an experimental spaceship with a three-man crew is deflected hundreds of thousands of miles off-course, before finally returning to Earth.

The Quatermass Experiment was to be the first of several successful collaborations between the writer and celebrated producer/director Rudolph Cartier. At the time, Television drama was broadcast live, and the art of small screen special effects were virtually unknown. Indeed, the horrific elements required by Kneale's story had to be created 'on the night' itself, within a tightly limited series budget of just over £3500. Once broadcast, the serial's impact was immediate, and tremendous. The combination of it being aimed, as it was, at an adult audience, as well as being the first episodic production of its kind, ensured it as an instantly popular success as well as being the basic template for the serials to follow.

TELEVISION CLASSICS of the 1950s



HANCOCK'S HALF HOUR

Transferring from a successful radio run in 1956, the comedic misadventures of one Tony Aloysius Hancock esq. of 23 Railway Cuttings, East Cheam, beguiled the television audience of the UK until 1961. Written by the prolific writing team of Ray Galton and Alan Simpson (who would go on to create another comedy legend - 'Steptoe and Son'), each hilarious half hour recounted a particular misadventure in the pretentiously uneventful life of the lugubrious, trademark Homburg-hatted, lead character.

Partnered initially with the highly experienced comedy actor Sid James, Hancock's immaculate comic timing allied with James' own skill and perfectly pitched and observed scripts from the resident writing team, ensured the series outstanding success.

The series had immense pulling power and many pubs complained that customers would stream out twenty minutes before the broadcast of the latest 'Hancock' to ensure that they got home in time and were comfortably in front of the television before the show started. Following this final season Hancock made an ill advised defection from the BBC to ITV, in the process dispensing with the creative input of Galton and Simpson. The dubious decision of 'The Lad Himself' to read his lines from autocue rather than memorising them was another sad nail in the coffin lid of Hancock's television fame, and one that ultimately led him to take his own life. However, at its peak, 'Hancock's Half Hour' was a genuine Rolls Royce amongst situation comedies, and that kind of sheer style and class never really goes out of fashion.



Big band, big sound and big big personality - with a rousing call of "Wakey-Wakey" followed by his signature tune "Somebody Stole My Gal", Billy Cotton introduced an inexhaustible 50 minutes of non-stop music, dancing and comedy in the essential weekend variety revue that was a stalwart of BBC programming for 12 years. The first BBC series went out on 29th March 1956 under the title of 'Wakey Wakey!' Billy Cotton also briefly hosted the variety series 'The Tin Pan Alley Show', although he was not very happy with this series which he saw no more than a "limbering up" for his main series.

Ronnie Waldman, the BBC's Head of Light Entertainment, introduced Billy to Brian Tesler who was to be producer of 'The Billy Cotton Band Show' and in

order to transfer the winning formula that had so entertained Bill's adoring audience for years he went along to watch one of the music hall gigs. "(I) saw what a vibrant show he put on with the band and singers." Said Tesler. "It was boisterous, and very funny. As I watched the band on stage I could see ways in which we could use their production numbers for television.

Billy Cotton was presented with an Ivor Novello award in 1959 and voted Show Business Personality of the Year in 1962.

Billy's Bag - Doing My National Service

— continued from page 26



THE SOLDIER AND THE SERGEANT

The first week after arriving at the new camp south east of Selby in the rural Drax area of Yorkshire in 1947, Billy the young British soldier was in trouble again and placed on 3 days CB (Confined to Barracks). As part of the punishment, he had to perform menial tasks each morning at a cookhouse in a camp further down the road, under the direction of a tall thin efficacious sergeant. To add to his problems he also had a minor altercation with the sergeant, which was not a good beginning at his new abode.

During the Saturday afternoon, Billy became aware that the camp was deserted, so he decided to ignore his CB and take a walk to the nearest hamlet, where he understood there was a dance every Saturday evening at the church hall.

The hamlet was a cluster of about 10 buildings consisting of a church with a recreational hall attached, a café, a pub and a few other structures. Having nothing in particular to do before the dance started, he took advantage of the beautiful weather and the peaceful outdoors by biding his time in the nearby park. As evening drew near he observed with interest a number of young girls in party dresses arriving at the church along a footpath between the benches in the park and concluded that he was privileged to preview the evenings dance partners.

The girl, who caught his eye, was different from the rest, didn't use makeup, didn't need it and dressed in typical country clothes, which consisted of a tweed suit and low heel shoes. She was not glamorous by any standards, but was an outstanding beauty in every respect. Mesmerized - his eyes followed her through the park, across the road and into the church. If love at first sight was for real, this was it and he began to contemplate the possibility of meeting her at the dance.

Negative thoughts entered his mind as he considered his bumps, lumps and blemishes and began to wonder what a stunning girl like this would want with a short young lad with little hair and definitely not the leading man type. However the negative thoughts passed and a positive attitude took over, as he began to plan his strategy for meeting this exceptional young lady at the dance.

Drawing from his experience in such matters he decided that the best plan was to enter the dance hall early before the competition was aware of her existence and dazzle her with footwork. The hall filled up very fast and couples linked to whirl around the floor to the sound of the music, as Billy searched the room for the target of his affections.

The second dance started and he considered the possibility that she may not be attending, particularly by the way she was dressed, so not wishing to waste his Saturday night, selected a lesser mortal to trip the light fantastic. After circling the floor a couple of times and engaging in small talk, he was fairly confident of companionship for the evening, but there was no chemistry, so he didn't linger.

Another dance came and went and still no sign of the girl in the tweed suit. By this time the romantic young man was somewhat dejected and decided that if he couldn't have the girl of his choice, he would rather be alone. Disregarding all the other girls, he positioned himself with a clear view of the door where they were entering and contemplated the best strategy if and when she appeared. It was not unlike a scene from a Woody Allen movie, with the anxious soldier considering the best approach - Should he rush across the floor to beat out the competition, or a less obvious saunter with the casual air of the bon vivant and risk losing her?

To his delight he noticed the natural beauty in the next room through a small window and knew that she was about to enter the hall. Without even thinking he was face to face with her within seconds and she accepted his invitation to dance. The next few minutes went by so fast that he was much too occupied to think about his good fortune, because as they made their way around the floor he noticed the tall sergeant from the cookhouse, who knew he was on CB and could easily identify him by his practically baldhead.

Instinctively Billy started to crouch as he continued dancing and explained the dilemma to his partner, who was slightly taller than him, but even more attractive close up. "Would you like to leave?" the girl asked as they danced towards to exit door. He was out of the door like a flash and to his amazement, followed by the girl. They then joined hands and skipped down the narrow country road, laughing with gay abandon, as though they had known each other all their lives. It was an exhilarating feeling, which can only be described as a magic moment!

On the way down the winding road to the girl's house they talked incessantly and he became aware that she was not only exceptionally beautiful, but also had a wonderful personality and disposition. A number of times during the evening, he felt like pinching himself to confirm that he wasn't dreaming. Not only did he find it difficult to believe that the outstanding girl decided to leave with him, but also that they had established such a rapport, considering that they had only met a few minutes before leaving the dance and they didn't even know each other's names. It was all very overwhelming!

To cut a long story short, at the end of the evening Billy returned to the road heading to the camp in semi darkness. A cyclist approached and he attempted to hitch a ride. The man on the bike was none other than the tall sergeant, who stopped and beckoned him towards the luggage rack over the rear wheel. It was a very large bike, suitable to the size of the sergeant, who peddled away without difficulty. Arriving at the camp the sergeant bid Billy good night as he scampered away undetected. "Thanks for the ride," shouted Billy as he disappeared in the darkness. Could it be that the sergeant didn't recognise him with his hat on at night, or was he really a nice guy and gave him a break? Billy would like to believe the latter!

The following week Billy was posted out of the area and never saw the girl who made his heart throb again. Later he borrowed an army vehicle one Sunday afternoon and drove from Halifax to track her down, but he was unable to find her or anyone else who knew her and was forced to give up. He considered additional visits in army vehicles, but decided against it when he encountered civilian police roadblocks looking for black marketeers of petrol, which was still rationed at the time.

In those days with telephones a rarity, computers unheard of and public transportation in the country leaving much to be desired, communication was difficult, to say the least.

In 1947 the Drax area was all country with farmland, hamlets and villages. The army Return Stores Depot, RSD was a huge complex of sheds storing army surplus goods and equipment shipped in from all over the country by train to a dedicated rail line going directly into the RSD. Soldiers from the Pioneer Corp camp just up the road and some civilians from the surrounding area worked in the stores and Billy's small RASC attachment provided the trucks to shunt the material from the trains to the sheds.

Billy was only stationed there a couple of weeks, which was not long enough to confirm the rumors that sheets were being burned and valuable equipment was being destroyed at the RSD. Word had it that the civilian population had protested the burning of the sheets, which they and the Ku Klux Klan would have appreciated. Had Billy known of the protest he would have also joined in, not having seen white textiles since he was called up. Convinced that valuable stuff was being destroyed, he decided to find a better use for it. Acting on another rumour that a farmer close to their camp paid good money for such items, he drove out the RSD gate one day with a bunch of large heavy spanners.

Presenting his booty to the farmer and expecting to negotiate a fair price, he was ushered into a barn where he was shown a particularly large container full of similar items. "I would like to sell you some," said the farmer to the confused soldier. Explaining that he had been buying the spanners from the soldiers for years and had no idea what to do with them. Deciding that there was no way he could overcome that objection, he inquired about petrol, only to be shown another shed with the largest tank he had ever seen, and advised that the tank was full and there was no where else to store it.

Billy knew a losing situation when he saw one and excusing himself from the friendly farmer, retreated with his tail between his legs carrying the heavy spanners. They were now a liability vs. an asset, because he didn't know what else to do with them, so he decided to dump them in the farmers duck pond. He was tempted to take a few duck eggs for his trouble, but there was nowhere to cook them.

Secretly hoping to find the lady in the tweed suit, he returned to the Drax area in 1992 to bathe in nostalgia and possibly find out what the farmer did with the spanners – the ones in the shed - not the ones in the duck pond! Billy started out from Selby on a road to the hamlet, which he had taken many times before back in 1947 and was astounded to find that the road came to a complete end in the middle of nowhere. All he could see in front of him were hedges and mountains. Questioning a nearby resident who was comparatively new to the area, he was told that the mountains in front of the road were really not mountains and just large piles of slag covered with green paint. The resident went on to explain that a monstrous generating station now occupies practically the whole of the Drax area and it's the largest coal-fired power station in Western Europe, with at least a dozen humongous chimneys and a similar amount of green painted mountains.

Not wishing to leave without seeing something he could reminisce about, Billy drove several miles south hoping to find evidence of the railway line, which used to enter the RSD. This time he was lucky and observed the rail line entering a field and going directly towards a mountain. It was as though the slag was deposited directly on top of the rail line and Billy wondered if they had done the same thing to the RSD, because removing all those tools and equipment would present a monumental task and it was all used material. The fact that the RASC detachment with the trucks moved out in 1947, lends credence to the theory that nothing was moved from then on.

Billy was unable to find anyone who remembered the hamlet or the RSD, because like the young lady in the Tourist Information Office in nearby Selby, everyone he talked to was too young to remember the areas history. Driving towards Chapeltown Billy couldn't help thinking that the farmer no longer had to be concerned about what to do with the spanners, because they were probably all under a mountain of slag.



THE POLISH CAMP

In 1947, Billy the British soldier arrived in a small Yorkshire town know as Chapeltown, a few miles north of Sheffield, where he was attached to a Polish Resettlement Corp PRC.

The British established the Polish Resettlement Corp PSC when the Polish army was dissolved after the war ended in 1945. It was intended to be a non-operational unit of the British army funded directly by the War Office. According to the records, the purpose of the PRC was to train the Polish troops who did not wish to return to a communist Poland for a civilian life, learning the English language and different trades so that they could find work. They stayed in uniform until 1948 when it was disbanded.

The so-called uniform worn by these men was standard British issue, except for modifications made by them and they didn't wear boots and gaiters. Uniform alterations included padding the shoulders of the blouse with different size triangles cut from a blanket, facing the opening of the blouse with matching material and inserting material in the side of the trousers to accomplish bell-bottoms. They did not wear hats, badges or insignias and were easily identifiable and not confused with the British soldiers.

The camp was situated on a high elevation overlooking the town and the gradient was so steep that the road leading up to it had to zigzag up the hill. It was a relatively small camp consisting of a number of temporary wooden billets. An army luxury Billy was now becoming accustomed to. There was a cookhouse, washrooms and latrines and that was it; there wasn't anything else, not even a NAAFI to get a cup of tea and a bun. Another resort for the rabble!

To occupy his time Billy decided to further his education by studying the Polish language and before long he could communicate fluently with words like: Witaj, obiad, kolacja, dobra zupa, nie mam pianiedzy, and chze misie siusiu, which loosely translated means: Hello, lunch, dinner, I'm broke and where's the toilet?

His duties involved transporting the Polish soldiers by lorry to the Howden moors each morning, drive back to the camp to collect their lunch, which they ate on the moors and then return them to the camp later in the afternoon. Now what on earth were they doing on the Yorkshire moors all day long, you might ask? And the answer was, looking for unexploded bombs. As previously explained the reason for the PRC was to train these men for civilian life, so it came as a surprise to Billy that there was such a demand for demolition experts.

In reality he would drop them off at a certain location on the moors in the morning, where they would walk over a hill and spend the entire day playing ball games, cards and just talking. They would emerge from the other side of the hill at noontime to have a relaxed luncheon overlooking the Derwent waters, before being transported back to camp. What on earth were the authorities thinking, sending these people out without any equipment to look for bombs? Did they think they were stupid because they spoke another language? Sounds like another game of silly buggers and it makes you wonder whom the stupid ones were!

Not too many of the Polish soldiers spoke fluent English, but the ones who did were friendly and he got to know a number of them very well. One in particular was the official interpreter and English teacher, who was a student when he was interned in a German concentration camp for a period of 5 years. He witnessed his parents being killed by the Germans and was personally shot through the back of his hand, damaging the ligament to one of his fingers rendering it useless. At a time before most people were aware of the Holocaust atrocities, this gentleman related many horror stories to Billy, which he would read about in subsequent years.

One day when he was in the cookhouse enjoying dobra zupa, 'good soup' with his teacher friend, a heated argument erupted between another man and his friend. They were both shouting in Polish and the man who he did not know placed his hand upright on the table, as if to comply with the teacher's command. At that moment the teacher, who was eating with a pointed knife, stabbed it through the center of the man's hand, pinning it to the wooden table.

After the wounded man exited the teacher explained that the man was a German collaborator during the war, who along with others, assisted the Germans interrogating Poles and suggested things like blocked gas masks. The teacher also mentioned that instead of staying in England, he and his friend, who was in the concentration camps 2 years longer than him, intended to return to Poland and make it their life's work to track down these collaborators.

On a lighter note, and wishing to bring some fun into his life at Chapeltown, Billy made a temporary modification to his uniform with shoulder pads, removed his shoulder insignia and leaving his hat behind, ventured out to the town with his friend looking like any other Polish soldier.

They had a pint in a local pub and made their way towards the park where they met two young ladies. Billy's female companion was very acceptable and everything was going well, except that when they initially met she assumed that he was Polish and for the hell of it he complicated the situation by talking to her in broken English. However as the evening progressed the Polish act became a strain. Now the sensitive soldier was reluctant to reveal himself, concerned that the lady would assume he was making a fool of her and take offence. He enjoyed the pleasure of her company so much that at the last minute he was tempted to confess and suggest another meeting, but the coward couldn't muster enough courage and they parted company never to meet again. Another ship passing in the night!

On the subject of courage and the fair sex, Billy got into a conversation with a female telephone operator and established that they were both about the same age and height. Over the phone he was very brave and also ascertained that she was good looking and had a nice figure. He was honest about his own appraisal, which was acceptable to her, and they arranged a rendezvous outside the movie house in Sheffield the following Saturday afternoon.

The young lady also informed him that he could view her photograph, which was in the middle of a photographer's window on the way to the movie house. Arriving by train from Chapeltown Saturday afternoon, Billy anxiously made a beeline for the photographer's shop, confirming that the girl was not exaggerating her appearance. Then for no apparent reason on his way to the meeting, trepidation set in and he was concerned that he wouldn't have an opportunity to evaluate her before committing.

He was obviously over sensitive and decided to allay his anxiety by walking past the movie house without stopping, attempt to see what she looked like and then return.

As Billy entered the crowd outside the movie house a beautiful girl stepped forward in his direction with a look of recognition on her face. Billy was now programmed to continue walking, which he did and realizing that the girl exceeded his expectations, quickly turned around to find her. No such luck, she had departed, never to be seen again! He searched the area thoroughly and couldn't understand how she could disappear so quickly. Where did she go? How did she go? - He will never know!

One thing for sure is that he kicked himself all the way back to camp and repeated the punishment frequently. It was a classic case of stupid boy doesn't meet girl!

The sentimental journey to Chapeltown in 1992 was another disappointment, because many things were very different. How dare they change things in just 45 years! The mountainous side of the town where the camp was located was completely covered with houses making it impossible to identify exactly where the camp used to be.

There was a large supermarket at the main intersection, which was another reminder of the passage of time. The one feature that had not changed and was recognizable was the unique entrance to the park, where he practiced his broken English on the unsuspecting female.

Finding the pub where Billy and his Polish friend enjoyed an occasional glass of ale presented a problem, because he only remembered one on a stretch of road of about 300 yards and now there were three. The fact that all the pubs appeared equally as old was evidence to the fact that his memory had failed him. The first pub at the beginning of the road was so different from his image that he rejected it out of hand. He wasn't too sure about the next one, but he popped in for a drink anyway and before he finished his beer he knew it wasn't the place. The last one was closer to his image, but still not recognizable, so again he entered and ordered a drink. He searched the area with his eyes like a detective and realized that walls from smaller rooms had been knocked down to make one large one, which was not unusual. Typically the young barmaid knew nothing about the anything and was even less interested, so he sat down in a corner by the entrance to enjoy his drink. Within minutes he became aware of the unusual seating arrangement, which consisted of very unique benches around a table. Immediately he was overcome by a feeling he had never experienced before in his life and although he was not religious, he knew it was spiritual. He then realized that this was the place where he sat with his friend 45 years before, only then it was a much smaller room. The experience was an epiphany!

Trying to put all the pieces of the puzzle together before leaving, Billy crossed the street to study the pub's exterior, but couldn't come to grips why it differed so much from his image. He engaged a lady of mature years in conversation and she recalled that they altered the appearance of the outside of the pub when they renovated the inside. The fact that they did such a good job maintaining an old pub appearance accounted for his confusion.

Having resolved that important problem, but still yearning for a little more nostalgia, Billy stopped an elderly gentleman and pointing his finger towards the houses on the mountain asked, "Do you remember the Polish soldiers camp up on the hill?" - "You mean the German prisoner of war camp," came the sharp reply. Attempting to continue the conversation Billy told him that he didn't realize that it was once a German prisoner of war camp and without so much as by your leave, the old gentleman shuffled on. It's anybody's guess what he took exception to, but Billy got the feeling that the man must have thought he was a returning German ex-POW, which didn't please him. With his thirst for nostalgia quenched, Billy rather sadly stole away into the night.

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Billy's Bag will continue in the next issue.

THE 1960s



The 1960's got off to an unintentionally prophetic start with Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's inspiring "winds of change" speech on February 3rd, 1960. However, the affectionately nicknamed 'Supermac', could never have envisioned that the 'winds' spoken of so eloquently would actually prove to be a raging tornado of social alteration and upheaval, which would, for a time, place Great Britain in general -and London in particular, at the stylistic and cultural centre of the world.

By the country's emergence from the ravages of the Great Winter of 1963, the nation had already experienced the end of compulsory national service on December 31st, 1960, the production of the millionth Morris Minor to roll off the production line on January 3rd, 1961, the untimely death of much loved performer, George Formby, the UK's formal application of membership to the fledgling European Union, the introduction of an iconic new hero to the cinema in the cool persona of secret agent James Bond 007, the end of steam power on the London underground network, and most tellingly of all, the advent in the world of

music of four young Liverpudlian lads whose initially simple appeal masked a burgeoning talent that would revolutionise and inspire both an industry and generations to come.

Even grimly offset by the audacious yet brutal events of the so-called Great Train Robbery of August 8th, 1963, and the sordid sexual scandal of the infamous 'Profumo Affair', the mood of the nation was one of almost idealistically unbounded optimism and dynamic energy. The 'Angry Young Man' given form by John Osborne had slipped the narrow bonds of the theatre and exploded upon cinema and television screens in a multitude of differing forms. Challenges to the tired and trusted way of things crashed in wave after seemingly endless wave against the besieged bastions of the old world order. Times, they were a' changing' at a dizzying rate. And by the middle years of the decade, the face of the nation was bright, colourfully beautiful and almost breath-takingly young.

From the musical taste altering banks of Liverpool's River Mersey to the heart of 'swinging' London's fab and groovy Carnaby Street, via England's memorable 1966 World Cup victory, the nation was gripped in a surging wave of near total confidence in itself that swept out to envelope the surface of the entire western world.

Eagerly adopting the free and pacifistic idealism that had begun on America's west coast, the country's youth quickly produced a vital and energetic hybrid counter culture, one which fused and accommodated the carefree casualness of the Hippie with the cooler, sharply attired, Avengers style elegance of freewheeling chic of the Kings Road Set.

Perhaps nowhere was this new found power more evident than in the prolific diversity offered up by the output of the entertainment industry. The brutally honest and stark bleakness portrayed in the landmark BBC drama *Cathy Come Home*, had single-handedly forced a profound change in attitude towards the appallingly hopeless social conditions endured by the disadvantaged. While at the other end of the spectrum, a young actor named Michael Cain, memorably and successfully transformed the womanising, amoral anti-hero of "Alfie" into a sympathetic and strangely tragic filmic icon.

The decade entered its final years in a day-glow hued kaleidoscopic frenzy of rapidly diffusing, undirected energy. Even by the triumphant technological wonder of the first manned moon landing in 1969, the stylistic storm, which had raged all but unchecked for the majority of the 60's, was all but spent. It's hedonistically ideological dreams left in the main fulfilled and imploded by the un-concerted lack of a unified direction of purpose in those that had driven them. Although many of its icons remain viably potent and alluring, viewed from the sobering distance of time, the 1960's although indisputably an important social evolutionary leap forward for Great Britain, now seems little more than an always impossible to realise, yet still charming and appealing utopian ideal, as the following decades were more than able to demonstrate.

THAT 60s FASHION THING - Denise Lovell



The 1960s marked a huge change in the world of fashion. There was a high percentage of teenagers in the population because of the post-war Baby Boom and a high level of employment meant they had plenty of money in their pockets. Previously, fashion had been dominated by designers from Paris and Rome and aimed at a richer, more mature clientele. Now young people were ready for a style of their own.

The hub of this change was 'Swinging London' where pop music, fashion and a new attitude to life blended into a style that was copied all over the Western world.



Home-grown designers such as Mary Quant introduced a fresh approach to clothes. They began to use a range of new, man-made fabrics; acrylics and polyesters, Bri-nylon and PVC. The subtle palette of the 1950s was swept away by bright colours and bold patterns, often inspired by the work of contemporary artists such as Andy Warhol and Bridget Riley.

The new, inexpensive fashions were sold through small, trendy boutiques rather than the emerging High Street chain stores or the traditional, more formal clothes shops. Self-service, pop music, low-lighting and quirky interiors were their trademarks and again London led the way with shops

such as Bazaar and Biba and areas like Carnaby Street and the King's Road.

The first half of the decade was dominated by the Mod look, sharp, well-cut suits for men, slim geometric shapes and shorter skirts for women. Hemlines had been rising since the end of the Fifties; in 1963 they were just above the knee. The French designer Andres Courreges included even shorter skirts in his 1964 collection, designed to be worn with his Go-Go boots, but it wasn't until Mary Quant launched her own version a year later that the newly-christened 'Mini Skirt' really took off.

By the end of 1965 hemlines had climbed to six inches or more above the knee, which was considered incredibly shocking by some sections of society. In some European countries the mini was banned or allowed to be a maximum of four inches above the knee. As minis got shorter, traditional stockings and suspenders began to be replaced by another design of Quant's, one-piece tights, in a range of ever-more outrageous colours and patterns. These allowed women to wear the shorter skirts without revealing too much but were not greeted with the same enthusiasm by many of the male population.

REMINISCE THIS

a little bit of nostalgia

Another side-effect of shrinking hemlines was a change in the way tax was applied to clothing. Previously, skirts less than 24" in length were classed as children's clothing and not subject to tax but in 1966 the rules were changed to take into account the trend for shorter styles.

It wasn't just fashion designers that were hitting the headlines; photographers like David Bailey and Terence Donovan and models such as Jean 'The Shrimp' Shrimpton also became household names. Hairdressers played their part too, creating new and exciting styles to complement the new fashions. Vidal Sassoon's geometric cuts such as 'the wedge' and Leonard of Mayfair's 'mop top' style, created for The Beatles, were much copied.



Leonard also helped create the look of a 15 year old girl from Neasden called Lesley Hornby. He cut her hair into a boyish style that combined with her large eyes and thin frame to give her a waif-like



appearance that fitted well with her nickname, Twiggy. After a photographic session arranged by her boyfriend Justin de Villeneuve, Twiggy was featured in all the leading fashion magazines and became a success almost overnight. Although she only modelled for around 4 years, later re-inventing herself as an actress, singer and TV presenter, Twiggy had a lasting effect on the world of modelling and became an iconic image of the Sixties.

At the beginning of the decade, fashionable menswear was sleek, slim-fitting and strongly influenced by Italian designers. Later a more flamboyant, 'dandy' style emerged, mixing cravats and flared trousers with frills, vivid patterns and fabrics such as crushed velvet - a world away from the kind of traditional menswear that had been around for the previous 150 years or so.

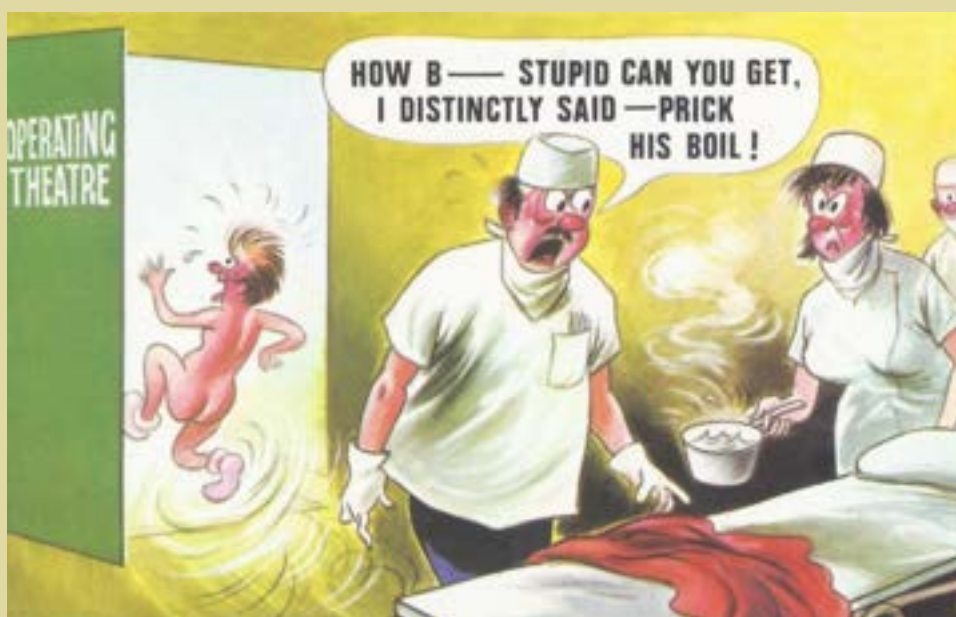
As for women's fashion, hemlines had continued to rise, in fact the so-called 'micro mini' was

scarcely more than a very wide belt, but in the late Sixties calf-length midi and ankle-length maxi skirts became popular.

The end of the decade brought a conscious rejection of materialism for many as the Hippie movement spread from California and as people became more interested in Eastern cultures and philosophies. Ethnic garments such as kaftans and Afghan coats became fashionable, Army Surplus shirts and combat jackets were worn with faded jeans and love beads. Flowers were worn in the hair and peace symbols and smiley faces painted on skin or worn as pendants or badges.

A lot of things changed in those ten years, fashion both reflected and influenced some of them, and it was great fun along the way.

A BIT OF SAUCY HISTORY by Bob Edwards



Every year when I was a boy our family would set off on a two-week holiday to a seaside resort on the south coast of England. In our particular case that would mean a stay at either Weymouth in Dorset or in later years Hastings in Sussex. My parents didn't like to experiment and so when they found a seaside town they liked they simply stuck with it. It didn't bother me. Those holidays were one of the two highlights of the year, the other being Christmas. Back in the 1950's and 1960's there were traditions associated with British seaside resorts which people tended to comply with. These traditions were such things as kids building all manner of constructions on the beach using buckets and spades, visiting the fair on warm balmy evenings and eating fish and chips out of newspaper when walking back to the digs. One of the biggest traditions was the buying of postcards to send home to friends, family and work mates.

The postcards to which I refer came in two distinct categories. The first of these were photographs of the town itself, the surrounding county-side landscapes or famous landmarks associated with the resort town in question. The second example were what folks used to call the saucy postcards which were cartoon drawings which usually depicted pretty young women or overweight ladies, both of which would be endowed with large boobs. In today's liberal world of open frankness on sexual matters, the cartoon characters and antics of the saucy postcard era would hardly lift an eyebrow. However, back in those days of sexual repression, "It" was very much a taboo subject, considered to be the height of bad manners bordering on obscene to discuss. Saucy postcards were just a giggle to some but to others were disgusting and were offended by them. To a young boy like me they were just bloody great.



The cheeky and often sexually implied innuendos and double meanings could be either visual or textual, though usually both picture and text played a part. No section of the community was spared; fat people, thin people, mothers-in-law, hen-pecked husbands, waiters and waitresses, lower class, middle class and upper class, glamorous ladies, doctors and nurses, etc, were all represented in cartoon characters. They were often portrayed in risqué, embarrassing or suggestive situations.

Although these saucy postcards can still be found at a few outlets at some British resorts they are nowhere near as prevalent or popular now as in by gone years.

The history of the seaside postcard goes as far back to 1894 when British publishers were given permission by the Post Office to produce picture postcards which could then be sent through the post. When holidaymaker's back then wanted to just drop someone a quick line or two the media was ideal. One has to recall that back in the middle of the last century there were no cell phones, no Internet and only a small proportion on the population had a telephone in their own homes. It was in the early 1930s that the cartoon-style saucy postcards became popular. At its peak the sale of saucy postcards was a massive 16 million a year. It's very likely that postcard collectors, known as deltiologists, bought many of the saucy postcards for their collections.

The saucy postcard industry offered employment to cartoon artists such as Tom Browne, John Hassall, Bruce Bairnsfather and Alfred Lees, as well as offering another outlet for Punch magazine cartoonists. There was one well-known, female artist, Mabel Atwell; however, her artwork involved cherubic children in cute, humorous situations. The best known of the publishers were Bamforth & Company. Although there were other companies that produced these cards these have since gone to the wall except that is for J. Salmon, a company that still continues to publish and is today's oldest established UK postcard publisher.

In the early 1950s, the newly elected Conservative government were concerned at the apparent deterioration of morals of the British public, and decided on a moral witch-hunt. The result was that although the humble saucy post card was not the major target of the granny state faceless people, almost every seaside resort in Britain was appointed a Watch Committee, whose duty was to decide which saucy postcards were allowed to be displayed and sold to the public; those they considered to be unfit were confiscated.

In the more liberal 1960's the saucy postcard was revived, and was considered as a form of art by some people, which helped its popularity and gave it an easy ride through the decade. However, during the 1970's and 1980's the quality of the artwork and humour started to deteriorate. This, together with a change in attitude and taste of the public in general and the introduction of political correctness, resulted in my view, for what its worth, the very sad demise of the saucy postcard.



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