

The Hedgerow

Issue 33, Winter 2013 ...a tangle of words from local writers...

The Hedgerow, a free publication from writers in the Epping Forest area, is distributed in libraries and bookshops from east London to Epping. Thank you to everyone who sent in submissions or helped with this edition. If you would like to write for *The Hedgerow* we would be pleased to hear from you.

Writing Out of a Musical Craze

The British skiffle craze was a two year fad, that lasted, commercially, from 1956 to 1958, with its best year being 1957. It not only created a huge swell of amateur skiffle groups around the UK, but out of these and its established professional and semi-pro acts, came some fine singers, musicians, actors even, able to carve out long-term careers, from such simplistic beginnings. It was also the starting point for some successful songwriters and the odd prolific scriptwriter, though probably not apparent at the time.

When Stanley Dale's 'National Skiffle Contest' played the Barking Odeon- on Sunday 15th December 1957, who, among the audience, could have guessed which way the careers of Wally Whyton and Jim Dale would go? Both were co-heading the two shows there-Wally was leading The Vipers Skiffle Group, who had notched up three chart hits that year, and Jim Dale was then a comic cum singer-guitarist, in the charts With a disc called 'Be My Girl', but had started his recording spree with a skiffle-type number, 'Piccadilly Line' - a parody he had written of Lonnie Donegan's hit 'Rock Island Line'. Like The Vipers, he had come to prominence on the BBC TV show '6-5 Special'. He would later join the cast of the 'Carry On' films, write hits for other artists, and appear as a legitimate actor on Broadway, along with other film roles.

Wally had also shown his songwriting ability - he had re-written an old sea shanty, turning it into a Top Ten hit for his group, thus insuring 'Don't You Rock Me Daddy-O' was a strong part of their act. The song also got picked up by Lonnie Donegan and his Skiffle Group, who took it into the Top Five. Lonnie, an ex-resident of East Ham, was then living in St. Margaret's Road Manor Park, before Woodford and a brand new house beckoned.

When the skiffle acclaim faded for The Vipers, Wally took to children's telly, and became the singing-guitarist sidekick to puppet Pussy Cat Willum, before teaming up with other TV puppets including Sooty, and being the 'voice' of Ollie Beak. His standing with the tiny tots allowed Wally to use his extensive memory of nursery rhymes and children's songs to record a number of albums and even a box set, which contained 'The Wally Whyton Song Book'. His other printed work was in 1977, when 'The Adventures of Pepe-The Spanish Guitar' was issued by Abelaid Schuman Ltd in London. But his most prolific work was as a scriptwriter. Originally paired with David Allen, on Radio 1 and 2, he went onto write the scripts and present 'Country Club' on R2 for 20 years; with similar dual roles for 'Folk Review' on BFBS, and 'Country Style' on the BBC World Service. But this work as a broadcaster came at a price-it meant side-lining the role of guitarist/folksinger/songwriter, which had seen him emerge on two labels-Fontana and Decca's 'Argo' subsidiary, with much of his own material, including the 'green' song 'Leave Them A Flower', which he featured on a UK tour with American country star Tex Ritter.

He died in January 1997, aged 67. It was certainly a long and varied career from those two skiffle shows at the Barking Odeon. Incidentally, for those that don't know, Barking Odeon was virtually opposite the railway station.

Alan Wheeler

"I can't do that" the shy man said "not here in front of you"

"My teacher told me years ago, such things are quite taboo"

"You must not shame us here" she said "you must be most aware"

"That singing is for choirs and evensong and prayer"

"Oh yes" said I "but why is that, they sing here in the pub"

"They sing with joy and gusto, enjoying grog and grub"

"I know" she said "they often do, they cause my ear much grief"

"Whilst sitting with their Fosters and chips and half raw beef"

"Singing is for experts, whose voice is pure and fine"

"Not oiks imbibing lager with thongs and vests and grime"

In time she stopped me singing, she really made it plain

My voice was something nasty and never heard again.

Howard Anderson

This issue of *The Hedgerow* is also available on-line at www.penny-freeston.com

Three Conversations

'Don't do that,' she says.
'Why not?'
'Because I say so.'
I cut another slice from the newspaper.
'Don't do it. Do you hear me?'
'Why not?'
'It blunts them.'
'I'm making patterns. What else can I use?'
'Find the old scissors.'
'Don't know where they are.'
'Try upstairs.'
'Where?'
'In the bathroom, or maybe the bedroom. Just go up and look.'

A few years later the conversation goes like this:

'Turn that noise down.'
'What?' I shout from the stairs.
'Turn it down.'
'I like it loud. It's no good otherwise.'

And many, many years later I say 'Mrs Williams from the flats sends her best wishes.'

'What?'
'Mrs Williams. I told her you were in here. She says she hopes you'll soon be home.'
'No. No. I don't want to go into that home.'
'No. Nobody said you are. Have you got your aid turned on?'
'What?'
'Have you got – here let me see. That's better.'
'No need to shout. I can hear you perfectly well.'

Monica Mukherji

My Grandma

When I was a child, my grandmother lived in a little old cottage with gas lighting which I found exciting, if a little spooky. I used to stay with her from time to time in a tiny room at the top of the house. Lying in my little bed, the gas lights would hiss and flare up casting shadows on the walls. To a child, with a vivid imagination like me, they became mad monks or huge snakes. I would bury my head under my eiderdown.

Some years later, my grandma moved to a small flat with electric lights. The first time my mother and I visited her and it started to get dark we were puzzled to see her pick up a bamboo cane with which to turn on the electric light switch.

When my mother asked her why she did this, she said that she didn't trust "this 'lectric stuff" – she was sure she could see it dripping down the walls and didn't want to get burned!

This, from a woman who, a few months earlier when visiting us, thought that the starting handle of our old car was a winding key used to wind it up. It would then run for a while until the spring ran down!when it would need to be rewound! No amount of explanation held any sway with her.

Just before she died, I visited her and she commented that the world had passed her by and she didn't understand it any more.

I am now just a few years younger than my grandma was at the time and I know what she meant: The internet, blackberries, Iphones, Ipads, spam, googling and twitter.....all go "whoosh" over my head and I am sure that if I had a bamboo cane, I would be using it to turn my laptop on.

Mo Woods

Although we are unable to publish everything we receive, poetry, prose and fiction submissions for the next edition are invited. Ownership of copyright remains with the author. Please do not send original manuscripts, only copies. Manuscripts may be retained for inclusion at a later date. Typed manuscripts, with name, address and telephone number should be sent to: The Editor, The Hedgerow, c/o 67, Derby Road, South Woodford, London, E18 2PY

*Many thanks to readers for donations received. Contributions welcomed to help finance future editions of this free publication. Contact the Editor.
The Hedgerow Contents © Copyright the individual contributors, 2013
The Hedgerow has grown from a Writers' Circle, established through the Friends of South Woodford Library.
Editor: **Penny Freeston***

Sculpting the Swimming Reindeer

Reindeer will swim again
antlers back, legs outthrust.
Water will ripple past eyes wide
stag will follow doe, paired in line
below river cliff, in curve long
like ivory tip of mammoth tusk.

Light will shorten, air will cool
ready for warmer plains,
migrating, mating,
like flint blade marks
for white-necked male
and dark barred female.

Long green valley now for herd to eat,
humans to hunt
mend, make and imagine,
survive the ice
and return in high sunlight.

Hazel Dongworth

Return to Camelot

And so Sir Gawain returned to Camelot with his bride. He had married the loathly lady to defend King Arthur's honour, to the horror of both king and courtiers, but now he was rewarded a thousand fold. His heroic chivalrous act had released her from a spell and she was now the most beautiful young woman he had set eyes on. How he had dreaded their night in the castle bedchamber, strewn with fresh rushes and decorated with greenery for the occasion. Slumped in a chair, he prayed for courage to face his ugly bride but as he turned, on hearing the rustle of silk, he felt he must be dreaming. The hag was nowhere to be seen and in her place stood the fairest of maidens. The pale girl's fair hair cascaded to her slender waist. He took her in his arms and she thanked him for releasing her from the magician's evil charms that turned her into an ugly hag. Only Gawain, a true and gentle knight could undo the spell. He caressed her gently, untying her gown and kissing her pale shoulders.

They climbed into the huge carved bed draped with velvet and he took her to be his wife with the utmost gentillesse. The young girl marvelled at her tall handsome knight and caressed his fair hair. His blue eyes were wet with tears as they embraced again on waking. They lingered long in the chamber, then sat by the open fire, longing to tell the king how the spell had been broken yet not wishing to leave their place of love making for all the world.

There was much feasting and dancing that night. All the knights of the Round Table envied Gawain his beautiful bride instead of pitying him, as they had done the night before, for being brave enough to marry the old hag. The young couple, so in love, stood entwined and the grateful king honoured his loyal knight with property and riches.

The day they came into Camelot Gawain rode a white charger, garlanded with roses. His lady sat in front of him as all the court scattered rose petals in their laps and lavender at their feet, cheering the handsome knight for his chivalry. They passed under many sweet-smelling bowers laden with roses of palest pink until they reached their chamber. The knight dismounted, lifted his bride down and held her close, then kissed her tenderly to the joy of all those around them.

Penny Freeston

The Brain!

The brain's a funny engine
It's running all the time
Its thoughts and wishes crowding in
Are difficult to devine
It is a mighty organ
With all the stops pulled out
Like love it conquers all
Of that there is no doubt

Remembrance in Autumn

Cerulean sky backdrops liquid gold sunshine
pouring through copper beech trees
surrounding stark war memorial.
Red papery smudges catch my eye
imprinting silent thanks
to those who gave so much
for this life of mine.
So lucky and sad, my eyes blur.
Concentrate on the traffic,
arrive home safely.

Rhonda Anderson

Some Brains are quick as lightening
Others are dull and slow
Which of these is the better
Of that we'll never know
The genius is much admired
The stupid just ignored
With such a sharp comparison
The Scholars will not be bored
Phyllis Kelly

Woodford, Chingford and the Figure of the Earth

Work to determine the precise dimensions of Britain and of the "Figure of the Earth", its size and shape, was part of the tremendous increase in scientific work of the late 18th Century. Greatly improved instruments had become available, the military threat from the French required accurate maps of the coastal areas and even when at peace with the French, the age old national rivalry gave rise to intense scientific competition. Delambre, Mechain and members of the Cassini family were busy over there using triangulation and astronomy to establish the standard metre as 1/10,000,000th the distance between the North Pole and the equator on a line running, of course, through France. Britain could not be left behind.

How does Woodford and the local area fit into this melting pot of scientific thought? Points in Woodford and Chingford were used in the triangulation of Britain, work that spanned 70 years. Accurate maps of the whole country could not be drawn until a network of fixed points had been established, a task closely linked with the triangulation. Not all the effort was by official scientists. A Mr Urban published some of his results in the *Gentlemen's Magazine* in February 1793; he had been using his Hadley Sextant from the spire of the church in Edmonton and gave bearings to the "cupola of Mr Bacon's house, Woodford Wells". Mr Bacon's house was built in 1768 for Anthony Bacon MP, an international trader in slaves, armaments, tobacco etc., one of the richest men in Britain. The house now forms part of Woodford County High School.

Triangulation is carried out with a theodolite, a device that can measure the angles between distant points. In the late 18th Century, Jesse Ramsden made a theodolite with the then incredible accuracy of a few seconds of arc, an accuracy that would be quite respectable even in modern instruments. One second of arc is less than 5mm seen from a kilometre away. Ramsden's great theodolite, 36 inches across and weighing 200 pounds was a wonder of the time, it is still inspiring to see on display in the Science Museum in London. At one point, it was mounted right on top of the cross on St. Paul's Cathedral! They built two separate sets of scaffolding, one to support the theodolite and the other for the observer so his movement would not disturb the observations. A good idea of what this looked like can be found in Rachel Hewitt's excellent book *Map of a Nation* that describes the birth of the Ordnance Survey. On page 173 it shows the amazing arrangement complete with the observer in a tent perched 115 metres above the pavement! It is said that over 10,000 observations were made from there, not just to distant points like Pole Hill but to fixed and visible points like the towers on Westminster Abbey, allowing local map makers to fix their maps on a common grid. Ramsden's theodolites (he made just two of these huge instruments), were used all over the country. On Pole Hill in Chingford, one was used by Captains Kater and Drummond in the summer of 1823 and again in 1848, but this time by Serg. Donelan of the Royal Sappers and Miners. One was also mounted on top of the cupola in the centre of Epping Poorhouse, a building that has since been demolished, but which stood on the site of the current St. Margaret's Hospital.

Since childhood I have wondered why there are two obelisks on Pole Hill. The key is the Observatory at Greenwich; the taller of the two obelisks marks very accurately the meridian as defined at Greenwich by the position of the special telescope known as a transit circle. This was set in place by James Bradley, the Astronomer Royal from 1742 until 1762. Before trees and buildings got in the way, Pole Hill and its obelisk were visible from the Observatory. A since vanished vane on the obelisk was used as a check on the precision of Bradley's transit circle. This instrument was superseded by one built for a later Astronomer Royal, George Airy. Owing to one of those frustrating situations that crop up in human organisations, no one thought that the 19 feet that separated the two instruments would cause any trouble to anyone else, but they were wrong. By the time Airy had placed his new transit circle, the embryonic Ordnance Survey had already embarked on its great survey of Britain. Much later, puzzling errors in the survey were tracked back to the meridian having been moved 19 feet, but it was far too late to change all their maps. To this day the Ordnance Survey still use the old Bradley meridian, not the one all the tourists have their photograph taken astride! In modern times when we have GPS it would be tempting to think that such problems have gone away, far from it. If you take a GPS to Greenwich and hope it will read zero degrees longitude on the famous meridian, you will be disappointed as the meridian used by a GPS, called WGS84, is about 109 metres further East. That means for navigation, there are three significant meridians at Greenwich; Bradley's as used by the Ordnance Survey, Airy's as marked so clearly on the ground and WGS84, not marked at all. As navigation moves completely over to GPS, the Greenwich meridian (Airy's), so proudly marked with a strip of metal on the ground for the tourists, will fade into history. It will however, remain in use for the setting of time local to the UK.

Howard Anderson

For Mr Bacon and his house, see www.whitehavenandwesternlakes.co.uk/people/anthonybacon.htm
www.berkshirehistory.com/bios/abacon.html and
www.walthamforest.gov.uk/Documents/conservation-area-woodford-green.pdf
For a drawing of the theodolite on top of St. Paul's, see www.dorsetlife.co.uk/2011/09/mapping-dorset