The Tony Hancock Appreciation Society proudly present our annual

BOURNEMOUTH

REUNION DINNER

To be held at
THE QUEENS’ HOTEL & SPA
Meyrick Road, Bournemouth, Hampshire BH1 3DL

SUNDAY 6th MAY 2012
Dinner 7.00pm for 7.30pm

Featuring our Honoured Guests (subject to commitments)
JUNE WHITFIELD * RAY GALTON * ALAN SIMPSON * TESSA LE BARS

Following last years change of venue to this new location and the very positive feedback received from all those who attended, we are delighted to return to this prestigious location along with our Honoured Guests above.

In order to see all that The Queens’ Hotel offers and book your room direct, visit their website at: www.queenshotelbournemouth.com or telephone 01202 554415. Don’t forget to mention that you are attending the THAS function and they will offer you our Special Discount of only £45.00 per person.

Like last year, all those who attend will be given
* A Complimentary Glass of Bucks Fizz when entering the Evening’s Event
* A Complimentary Glass of Wine with their Meal
* A Free ‘Goodie Bag’ containing many rare items of Hancock Memorabilia
* Autograph and Photo Opportunities with our Honoured Guests

Apart from all the above and Meal (see Menu right) we’ll also have all of the following:
* Sunday Afternoon Hancock Quiz
* Rare Video Screenings
* Display of Rare Hancock Archives
* THAS Merchandise Stall
* Live Auction of Rare Hancock Related Material
All this for the Low Price of Only £27.00

To book your place at this prestigious event, please write direct to THAS Treasurer: Ken Clarke at his address of 24 Heenan Close, Frimley Green, Camberley, Surrey GU16 6NQ enclosing your payment (made payable to THAS) of only £27.00 per person. Don’t forget to enclose your Name, Address and Email along with whether you’d prefer the Vegetarian Alternative from our Menu, plus a SAE if you’d like a reply.

Having the actress from Hancock’s most famous TV role plus both the Original Scriptwriters and their Agent - this event is sure to be a sell-out, so BOOK NOW to avoid disappointment!

MENU
Leek and Potato Soup
* Breast of Chicken plus Seasonal Vegetables and Potatoes
Vanilla Pannacotta
Coffee and Mints
* please state if a Vegetarian alternative is required

RIP RICHARD CARPENTER by John Thompson

On Sunday 26th February 2012 Richard Carpenter sadly passed away, he was 78 years old.

Richard “Kip” Carpenter was born in King’s Lynn in 1933, and enjoyed a country childhood reading “Shakespeare, Greek myths and The Beano” before training as an actor at the Bristol Old Vic. From there he bounced around the reps and cropped up in films such as The Password is Courage (1962), alongside Dirk Bogarde, but it was television that provided both regular work and an excellent pupillage in writing convincing dialogue.

He wrote many successful TV programmes; Catweazle in 1969, The Ghosts of Motley Hall from 1976 to 1978, Dick Turpin from 1979 - 1982, Robin of Sherwood and Black Beauty. He also wrote many books based on his TV work.

Richard’s only appearance working with Tony Hancock came in 1961 in an episode called The Bowmans.

I was lucky enough to meet Richard and his good lady Annabelle Lee three times: Birmingham Mac in 2003, Bournemouth in 2005 and Birmingham Joint Stock in 2009, they were all good events.

Richard Carpenter, actor, writer and producer: born King’s Lynn 14 August 1929; married Annabelle Lee (one son, one daughter); died 26 February 2012.
Anthony Aloysius St. John Hancock
The Lad Himself (1924 - 1968)
“Stone Me, What A Life!”

The basic aims of The Tony Hancock Appreciation Society are to promote the works of Tony Hancock for the continued awareness and enjoyment of the general public and to collect and classify the recorded works of Tony Hancock for the benefit of members. No active individual receives payment for service to the Society, which is a voluntary organization. All members details and information are covered under The Data Protection Act and cannot be used by any other than the THAS. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission in writing of The Tony Hancock Appreciation Society. All views, comments and letters reproduced in this publication are entirely those of the individual author concerned and in no way reflect the views of the general membership of the THAS.

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ARCHIVES Position Vacant

To apply, please contact Vice President

BACK ISSUES of The Missing Page, Pitdown Glory and Railway Cuttings @ £1.10 per issue, available from Cyrilla Rogers
5 Kilwood Avenue, Hockley, Essex SS5 4PR

A bit late I know, but a Happy New Year to all our members and thanks for continuing to be a member of our esteemed Society.

Like our last issue, this edition is arriving a little early to give you all a bit more time to book your place at our Bournemouth Reunion in May this year. Full details are in the advert on the opposite page, but allow me to apologise for missing out a digit in the telephone number for The Queen’s Hotel in our last issue (well our magazine is called The Missing Page after all!) I’m pleased to say, this issue’s advert is all present and correct, so give them a ring on 01202 554415 to book your room at this prestigious event.

I couldn’t end this short introduction to this issue, without expressing my huge gratitude to THAS member Ted Masters, who over the past few years has been an enormous help to me in the compiling of The Missing Page. Ted has been responsible for the layout and style since (reluctantly) agreeing to lend his hand in helping me as Editor. Sadly his Apple Mac Computer has suffered a major crash and he can no longer carry out the invaluable help in our magazine’s preparation. Both Ted, and I, are hoping that a miracle will take place and he’ll be able to resume his duties, but in the meantime, A Big Thank You for all your help Ted and here’s hoping your Mac will once again fire-up and show me how to do this properly!

There’s loads of news to try and cram into this edition, so let me just say that it’s been an honour to have written these brief introductions over the past few issues, but owing to his continued progress and complaining that his ugly mug hasn’t been gracing our pages recently, I’m more than happy to hand over the rest of this short article to our President Dan Peat.

Hi lets start on a very sad note, I was so shocked to hear of the death of our dear friend Mike Brown.

Mike died on the 4th of December 2011 he interviewed many of our honorary guests: June Whitfield, Richard Briers, and many more. Mike also worked hard for the Goon Show Preservation Society and they miss him so much too. It’s still not known the cause of his death. Mike was cremated at Anfield crematorium on Friday 16th December. John Thompson, John Repsch from the Goon Show Preservation Society and myself attended the service with others. Mike was not a religious man, so at the end of the sevice they played Monty Python’s Always Look on the Bright Side of Life! Bless you our friend.

Now for the good news June Whitfield, Ray Galton, Alan Simpson and Tessa Le Bars, will be our guests for our Bournemouth Reunion Dinner on Sunday the 6th of May. That’s not good news it’s great news. See you all there.

Also as its fifty years after the making of The Punch and Judy Man. Our friend Jeff Ham-mond and John Thompson are making a day to celebrate, which is on Sunday 10th June at Bognor Regis Museum. See Jeff’s advert on this issues’ back page. Well done Jeff and John.

Sad to hear of the death of Richard Carpenter he was a great man. He came to our Reunion Dinners with his wife Annabelle Lee. Richard was also in the Bowmans with Tony Hancock. See John Thompson’s write up on the page opposite. As we went to press, we also heard the sad news that Denis Chinnery has also passed away, we’ll include a full tribute in our next issue.

Well lets hope the summer is going to be better than the winter, so cold, snow, ice, then sun. As Mark Twain once said; “if you dont like the British weather ….. wait a minute!”

All the very best and lots of love from….Dan or Nad.

The Missing Page
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The Tony Hancock Appreciation Society
www.tonyhancock.org.uk

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Dear Bighead Hancock

I hate you and everybody down our street hates you!

Letters for publication should be sent to the Editor at his address on page 3

Happy to be of service

I just wanted to say thank you for your help in reference of getting the box sets of Tony Hancock radio shows. I have received a reply from Dryden Pennington and have bought the box sets. I appreciate your help in this matter. I’ve been a member of THAS off and on since 1988. A guy who I worked with back then gave me his address, so this was the start of me being a fan of Tony, so much has been written about him books, plays on TV and on stage. It proves Tony Hancock will never be forgotten.

Of course back then in 1988, there was no internet, things have changed in THAS, it’s natural for things to change and develop as time goes by. I have over the years borrowed many of the great tapes from the THAS library, the tapes are getting worn, this is why I wanted to get the box sets. Tapes and Vinyl have been getting fazed out over the last few years as we all know, CDs have taken over. Now, of course Downloads are the next thing.

I wonder what Tony would think of all this? Anyway Andrew, thanks again for your help, it’s much appreciated, keep up the great work on Tony Hancock.

It’s good that BBC7 and now BBC4 Extra are running his shows, I can listen to them time after time. I guess that’s the magic of Tony Hancock!

Yours sincerely

Steve O’Sullivan from Middlesex

The Editor replies:

Steve originally wrote in asking about the availability of the Hancock Boxed Sets that we have for sale and as you can see, through team work, he now has what he wanted and is a happy man. It’s always best to check with Dryden - our Merchandise Man - to see if you can take advantage of the cheaper prices that the THAS offers its’ members for any Hancock related material that we may have in stock.

Feedback following THAS appeal

As mentioned in The Missing Page, here are some comments regarding improvement of income.

1) More ‘new’ people need to be made aware of Hancock and his work. I don’t think Radio 4 Extra is the radio station that possible new recruits will listen to or perhaps even know/care about. Maybe putting some shows on Radio 2 would help. Also some extracts on the web site if possible.

2) It should be stressed that THAS CDs contain complete shows (if they do), pointing out cases where the BBC CDs are incomplete.

3) Possibly the magazine could be sent out in email form to save post and printing costs.

4) In the current financial situation I think it would be unwise and unfair to run any events at a loss.

Roger Browne via Email

More Suggestions

I saw your piece in the Missing Page about funds being tight and would be interested to see a set of the accounts if you could email them to me.

One idea in case it helps (forgive me if you have thought of it before or do it already):

You probably don’t want to put the subs up but could you, with renewal reminders, encourage those that can to give an additional voluntary donation.

Alternatively, the subscription could be reworded; instead of a specific sum you could refer to ‘a minimum of £12.50 and encourage people to give more if they can. Even if few of us rounded it up by a few quid it would help.

Keep up the good work Regards

From Russell Bowman via Email

The Editor replies:

Two good letters there with plenty of food for thought about ways in which we can keep the good ship THAS afloat in these troubled times. Much as we’d like to get Hancock played on Radio 2, the BBC seem to only have room for this type of material on Radio 4 or 4 Extra, but we’ll certainly keep pushing.

As Russell’s ‘minimum sub’ suggestion, it seems an excellent idea to both Ken (our treasurer) and myself. But how do other members feel about voluntary paying a little bit extra? Do write in and let us know.

Can you help?

I am doing a scoping report on Tony Hancock’s London addresses, with a view to a possible blue plaque. The most promising appears to be Queen’s Gate Terrace, which I believe was his longest term address in London (it has to be a London home). I wonder if you happen to know which number he lived at - in what I gather was a fifth floor flat? I have established that Queen’s Gate Terrace is pretty much unchanged since Hancock lived there, meaning that his house must survive whatever the number is. This was the main point of my enquiry. He and Cicely are probably in the electoral registers but for various reasons that it is a bit of a fiddle to look up at the moment, which is why I posted the question.

Howard Spencer via Email

The Editor replies:

Thanks for your enquiry Howard, I believe THAS members for any Hancock related material you may have in stock.

Film Fun request

Sometime ago I requested help in obtaining the above and David Rand in Australia has very kindly sent me 6 colour cartoon sheets. They’re wonderful and a very useful and memorable addition to my Hancock collection. Whilst writing, have you heard any news please re the Hancock stuff found in Bob Monkhouse’s archives? On the TV prog it was mentioned that the Beeb were releasing the material this year.

Hope you’re well, All the best

Terry Copper via Email

The Editor replies:

If you’re a Film Fun fan Terry, then you’ll love our centre page spread this issue and the promise of more to come! As to your enquiry regarding any rare Hancock material in Bob Monkhouse’s collection, our Audio Librarian, Mick Dawson, has told me that he’s just ordered the book “Bob’s Full House” so should be able to glean some answers to your questions once he’s read it.

Old Time Radio Today

I stumbled across an American website called Old Time Radio Today, which lists a large amount of Hancock’s Half Hours available on CD. A couple of oddities - one called The Wrestling match which I assumed would be The Grappling Game, but this is listed separately. Another is Hancock’s Wedding which I don’t know at all.

The website hasn’t been updated for some years. I wonder if anyone has knowledge of this website or the episodes mentioned above.

Les Creighton via Email

The Editor replies:

Very interesting Les, can any THAS members out there shed any light on these couple of anomalies, or the website in general?

Could this be our New Archivist?

I thought you might be interested in the attached mp3 I’ve strung together from clips on the BBC documentary about Bob Monkhouse’s massive archive of recordcings and from a short independent video that Kaleidoscope produced which I found on youtube.

Anyway, I recently purchased “Bob’s Full House: A Peek into the Personal Archive of Bob Monkhouse” and having skim read through quite a number of pages I think I can identify some 4 or 5 other recordings that Kaleidoscopic have (some of which may be in the THAS archives, the Blackpool show certainly is) which I’m going to type up tomorrow.

As I’m missing the last couple of magazine’s I don’t know if there’s been any recent news on these recordings or the BBC’s indented CD release of them possibly at some point this year. But please do let me know if you want me to forward you the info I’ve gleaned from the aforementioned book.

I did notice that there’s currently a vacant position for the role of “Archivist”, this is something fairly close to my heart, as I’m very into recording old reel to reel tapes, cassette’s and 78’s into my old computer and am similarly analytically retentive in transferring VHS tapes onto DVD’s and scanning magazine articles and photo’s into an electronic format (and that’s just for personal recordings and family history etc).

But if I can help in any way or offer my services at all please do let me know.

Jonathan Street via Email

The Editor replies:

Unless I’m suffering from some kind of mental disorder Jonathan, your letter certainly sounds as though you’re seriously offering your services as our Archivist! Rest assured there is currently a letter winging its way to you outlining all that’s involved in taking on the lofty mantle of this role. Thanks for all your time and effort and for the info on the Bob Monkhouse Archive, which will no doubt also be of interest to Terry Copper following his letter elsewhere on this page.
Thanks go to THAS member Ian Payne who directed us to The Daily Telegraph web site for the following tribute to Ronnie Wolfe.

Ronnie Wolfe, who has died aged 89, was one of the creators of the television comedies The Rag Trade (1961-63) and On The Buses (1970-75), among many other sitcoms. With his writing partner Ronald Chesney, Wolfe created such catchphrases as “Everybody out!” (the battle-cry of the boilie, chain-smoking shop steward played by Miriam Karlin in The Rag Trade), and “I’ll get you, Butler” (the unavailing weekly threat of Blakey, the fist-shaking inspector, played by Stephen Lewis, in On The Buses).

Wolfe’s partnership with Chesney, now 92, led to the pair being known as “the other Two Ron-nies”. On The Buses was commissioned by ITV after being rejected by the BBC, despite the success of Wolfe and Chesney’s earlier series The Rag Trade. It featured such characters as Reg Varney’s bus driver Stan Butler, and the amorous conductor Jack Harper (Bob Grant), and led to three spin-off films.

Wolfe and Chesney’s other popular shows included Meet The Wife (BBC, 1964-66) with Thora Hird and Freddie Frinton, and, for ITV, Yus , My Dear (1976), and Take A Letter, Mr Jones (1981), with John Inman.

Harvey Ronald Wolfe-Luberonoff was born on August 8 1922 at Stoke Newington, north London. His grandparents were Russian migrants who had settled in the East End, where his father ran a small chain of restaurants before moving to Southend-on-Sea to run a highly-successful fish and chip shop called Wolfe’s.

Ronnie was educated at the Central Foundation Boys’ Grammar School, Islington, and during the war worked as a radio engineer at the Ecko factory in Southend. During tea breaks, he entertained staff with stand-up routines, and in the 1950s he moved into writing, turning out scripts for the Jewish comedian Max Bacon. This led to his scripting a weekly spot for Beryl Reid, as the young Brinnie Marlene, in the BBC Radio comedy series Educating Archie. When the chief writer, Eric Sykes, left the show, Wolfe took over.

His highly successful partnership with Ronald Chesney, a harmonica-playing comedian, began with The Rag Trade, set in an East End garment workshop, which they created and wrote, and which caught the mood of factory floor life in the early 1960s. “Everybody out!” became a national catchphrase. Such was the show’s wide appeal that it also did well abroad.

Also, in the cast was the comedian Reg Varney, who 10 years later starred as the bus driver Stan Butler in On The Buses, which they created and wrote for London Weekend. Set in a London bus depot, this was another workplace sitcom. As in The Rag Trade, the stories largely hinged on assorted battles between staff and management. Once again, the humour proved exportable, and more than 100 episodes of the series were remade for television in South Africa, using a different cast.

Of the three spin-off films, the first, also called On The Buses, became the highest-earning British film of 1971. Wolfe and Chesney wrote the scripts and also produced the films.

Their next television success came with four series of Meet The Wife (1964-66), which developed from a single Comedy Playhouse presenta-
tion in 1963 called The Bed. Starring Freddie Frinton, and Thora Hird as his socially ambitious wife, it is the only British sitcom to be cited in a Beatles song. In Good Morning, Good Morning on the album Sergeant Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band (1967), John Lennon, who wrote it, sings: “It’s time for tea and Meet The Wife”.

Ronnie Wolfe married, in 1953, Rose Krieger, who, as his secretary, estimated she typed 95 per cent of his entire comic output. She and their two daughters survive him.

Ronnie Wolfe, born August 8 1922, died December 18 2011.

FILM FUN RESTORED by Nigel Parkinson

Long standing readers of our magazine will be aware that there has long been a cry from some members for the re-printing of the classic Film Fun cartoon strips featuring Tony Hancock. When he was more active in the THAS, our old friend and Archivist, Malcolm Chapman, was a regular supplier of these rarities, but owing to his ill health, we have been unable to find an alternative source, until now that is!

Long standing THAS member and Beano and Dandy cartoonist to boot, Nigel Parkinson has not only agreed to supply us with issues from his collection, but also has done a fantastic job in ‘touching-up’ and restoring some original photographs that Malcolm had previously sent in.

Reproduced opposite is a small indication of the original quality of the photocopy compared to the magic that Nigel has performed, just to give you an idea of the painstaking time and effort he has put in their restoration. Not only that, but he has also written this short introduction to what is hoped to be a regular feature. The first of these Film Fun extracts appear on the next two pages.

Film Fun Comic strip – an introduction by Nigel Parkinson, Beano and Dandy cartoonist

In ‘The Economy Drive’ Hancock gets a laugh by mentioning his subscription to the contemporary children’s comic Film Fun. The joke was doubly funny because Tony Hancock had just turned up within it’s pages as a regular comic strip – a curious event.

During the feature’s run, it was drawn by four very different artists. The most distinctive was Spanish artist Juan Rafart Roldán, 1928-1997 who published under the name Raf. He mainly drew for Spanish comics, briefly working for British titles in the early 1950s he moved into writing, turning out scripts for the Jewish comedian Max Bacon. This led to his scripting a weekly spot for Beryl Reid, as the young Brinnie Marlene, in the BBC Radio comedy series Educating Archie. When the chief writer, Eric Sykes, left the show, Wolfe took over.

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In ‘The Economy Drive’ Hancock gets a laugh by mentioning his subscription to the contemporary children’s comic Film Fun. The joke was doubly funny because Tony Hancock had just turned up within it’s pages as a regular comic strip - a curious event, as he had only made one movie at that time (Orders are Orders), and not even as the star!

During the feature’s run, it was drawn by four very different artists. The most distinctive was Spanish artist Juan Rafart Roldán, 1928-1997 who published under the name Raf. He mainly drew for Spanish comics, briefly working for British titles in the early 1960s. On the other hand, Londoner Reg Parlett (1904 – 1991) was a mainstay of the publisher and worked for almost every comic AP/Fleetway made. His run drawing The Lad ‘Imself during 1959 is often looked at as the prime of the strip. Others who drew it were Terry Wakefield with his distinctive ‘pre-war’ look and another Spanish artist I’ve yet to identify further. This strip is by him, whoever he is. If anyone knows him, I’d love to be told!

Speaking of which, after many enquiries I still haven’t been able to find out who wrote these scripts which are generally very close in spirit and form to the TV and radio Hancock’s Half Hours. I asked Ray Galton and Alan Simpson themselves but they couldn’t remember anything other than signing a waiver (Ray remembered not being paid much, if anything!) I asked former Fleetway assistant, Alan Fennell of Thunderbirds scripting fame, and he thought either one of the Film Fun editorial writers had done them or that Brad Ashton, a comedy writer of great experience had possibly had a hand in them. I asked Brad and he said he may have but had no recollection. So I still don’t know!

Whoever they were, they did a grand job, and over the next few issues we’ll be enjoying their timeless work again.

Hats off to them! Homburg, of course!
Oho! Here comes trouble—Sid’s middle name!

Tony Hancock
assisted (more or less) by his old china Sid James

It had been so long since Sid had found a part for him, that Hancock was afraid in case he was forgetting how to act...

Old your 'Geez!' I've got something lined up for you!

Ben Sheba. The big American film producer arrives at Southampton 'tomorrow.' I'm taking you along to see him.

You mean you’re arranging for him to see me? Not yet, but go and get your beauty sleep while I go and fix things up! Fair enough, Sid!

And next morning...

Look what's pulling up outside! A dusty great car! Don't tell me you've invited him here?

No, no! That's for us to go and meet him in!

Stone me! All the way to Southampton in that! It'll be cheaper to buy it! What's the big idea?

I'm puttin' you over big, 'Hancock! He can't fail to see you if you roll up in this!

And at Southampton... timed it just right! Here he comes now, stand by, 'Hancock!
Monday October 10th 2011, Ken Dodd officially opened The Blackpool Comedy Carpet.

On the carpet are the names of every comedy actor/actress who have played Blackpool. The carpet covers a staggering 2,200 square metres and is opposite the Blackpool Tower, from the top of which you can get a nice view of the carpet!

The carpet comes in 20 sections and Hancock is on section 7. I was pleased to see a lot of actors who have worked with Hancock like Sid James, Kenneth Williams, Bill Kerr, Hattie Jacques and John Le Mesurier to name but a few. On the outside of the carpet is a border with the names of every actor and writer including Galton and Simpson. The actors name are in black and the writers names are in red.

If you live near the North West or are going up North, have a look for yourself, it’s well worth a visit. At the Blackpool Tourist Information Centre you can buy a Comedy Carpet Guide for £2.99.

Pictured below is the entire carpet, with the section on Tony Hancock, alongside the brief description of his career from the Guide, along with a photograph showing you just how huge the Comedy Carpet is in relation to the people walking on it.
The Best Of Hancock
(Hallmark) B006GP3TQA Release Date 1/1/12
This release is a re-release of the budget Hallmark album featuring The Blood Donor and The Radio Ham 1961 Pye recordings. Priced at £5.44 on Amazon, this release clearly remains in the Budget Range.

Hancock’s Half Hour
(Vintage Beeb) 978-1408470589 Release Date 2/2/12
The latest release in the Vintage Beeb series is Hancock’s Half Hour Vol 1, featuring The Poetry Society and Sid’s Mystery Tours both heavily edited and without any incidental music as per the original vinyl and cassette release. As with other releases in this series, the CD is a facsimile of the vinyl LP. A nice new release and great to see the original artwork recreated for both the front and rear covers.

Citizen James
(DVD) AV9880 6/2/12
This first DVD release of Citizen James from Acorn Media features all known surviving episodes of this series. This is all of Series 1 (6 episodes), written by Galton & Simpson and broadcast in 1960 after Sid James finished in Hancock’s Half Hour and 2 episodes from Series 2 and Series 3 (1961 and 1962) and written by Sid Green and Dick Hills (writers of Morecambe & Wise). The set includes an interview with Liz Fraser and also ‘Galton & Simpson on Citizen James. A fantastic release and hopefully the start of many releases from the historic BBC archive.

Make ‘Em Laugh
DMC771 Delyse Label 1964
The author found this LP in a local charity shop. Described as a seminar on writing for TV Comedy, the LP is a recording of extracts from this seminar with contributions from Sid Green & Dick Hills (Morecambe & Wise), Frank Muir & Denis Norden (Take It From Here) and Alan Simpson and Duncan Wood (Ray Galton was abroad at the time or recording). Annotated as one of the ‘Delyse Master Series’, the LP is a fascinating insight into how the writers of the day approached writing TV comedy and how this differed from writing for radio or the printed word. The Master Series is described on the sleeve as ‘a series of talks, lectures, demonstrations and illustrations given by the acknowledged masters in their respective professions.

Like many of us in the THAS, I was shocked and saddened to receive the news just before Christmas that Mike Brown had suddenly died.
He had been an important member of not only our Society but also The Goon Show Preservation Society for many years. In their recent newsletter GSPS member, John Reph has written a glowing tribute to Mike and it is with our acknowledgements and thanks that we reproduce an amended version here:

“Writing this tribute to Mike on the train to his funeral at Anfield has a touch of the surreal about it. It’s less than three weeks since he breezed into the GSPS London meeting, looking his usual dapper self - well, he was only 65 - and he rarely missed them. Over the past few years he had become a regular writer for the Newsletter. Maybe he was making up for lost time, because he had had surprisingly little experience as a writer before discovering the Hancock and Goons’ societies.

We have not heard the last of our Mike. Fortunately a legacy of his work will continue adorning these pages for some while yet.”

For my part, having only recently taken a more active role in the running of the THAS, following my elevation to Vice-President, I had the pleasure of liaising with Mike on several matters over the past year or so and found him to be both knowledgeable and courteous as these examples show.

Over the years, Mike had contributed many articles and important research to the THAS, among them exclusive interviews with Larry Stephens, Eric Sykes, June Whitfield and more recently Roger Willmut.

Prior to last year’s Bournemouth Reunion, Mike was instrumental in securing the attendance of our Honoured Guest Richard Briers, following being invited to his home for the interview that appeared in The Missing Page last year. During these negotiations, Mike would telephone me on a regular basis keeping me up to speed with his plans and was at pains to account for every penny spent, always looking out for savings and cheaper alternatives and genuinely feeling guilty in submitting any expenses at all!

His help, friendliness, knowledge, generosity and unassuming manner are something that will be sadly missed by all those who knew him. Our sympathies go to all of his family and friends and we in the THAS, should feel honoured that we counted this true gentleman among our members.

Note: Although there has been no explanation for Mike’s death, Mike’s brother John has suggested that any donations in Mike’s memory should go to Cancer Research.
ENTERTAINING MISTER HANCOCK by Galton & Simpson

THAS member Anthony Green has kindly sent in the following from The Guardian January 23 2012

They made TV history together and were planning their next movie - until Tony Hancock rejected their script. Ray Galton and Alan Simpson reveal why The Day Off is now back on

The best review we ever had wasn't from a critic. It was from an artist, Lucian Freud. He said that The Rebel was the greatest film ever made about modern art. The 1961 movie was the first, and sadly the only film we made with Tony Hancock. It's the story of an office clerk, played by Hancock, who believes himself to be a great but undiscovered artist. When he's fired from his job he moves to Paris, in the hope that the art world will recognise him for the genius he is. Of course, being Hancock, he's a terrible painter; but his ability to act like a genius persuades a group of fashionable young artists that he might be the real deal. When he accidently gets the credit for a better artist's work, he finds himself feated as the Next Big Thing, with inevitably disastrous results.

It's an idea that runs through a lot of our work: the gap between people's idea of themselves and how the rest of the world sees them. When we were growing up, the most popular comedies were films like The Road To series with Bob Hope, which were about very street-smart, wisecracking heroes making their way to somewhere exotic and far-flung. But we never felt that life was like that. We were much more interested in the comedy of attitude: people's attitude towards their life and situations. Failure is a lot more funny than success, and Hancock's failure was a lot more funny still, because he played it so brilliantly.

The Rebel did well at the box office, and Hancock was nominated for a Bafta as most promising newcomer (to leading film roles). At that time, the film world was rather snobbish about television actors, but Hancock was very ambitious. He didn't just want a career in British film: he wanted to be in the film world. The trumpet of his ambition was The Day Off, a London bus conductor on the verge of becoming a world-famous actor. The Day Off was about just that: a London bus conductor on the verge of becoming a world-famous actor.

The Day Off sat in a filing cabinet in Ray's base- ment for almost 50 years, until Christopher Stevens discovered it last summer while writing a book about us. The Masters of Sitcom. Now it will become a film. And Woody Allen is amazing. Even his rubbish is better than most people's finest work. Like them, we, too, have always been more interested in the comedy of attitude: people's attitude towards their life and situations, rather than lots of wisecracks.

Concentrate on character

Of the American directors, Billy Wilder is the king of comedy: 1959's Some Like It Hot is an almost perfect film. And Woody Allen is amazing. Even his rubbish is better than most people's finest work. Like them, we, too, have always been more interested in the comedy of attitude: people's attitude towards their life and situations, rather than lots of wisecracks.

Own your work

If comedy's good, it lasts. Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton are still very funny. So are Laurel and Hardy. Stan Laurel was the genius: he did all the writing and directing. But they signed all their work over to the studios. Tony Hancock went to see Laurel and found him almost peniless, living in a bungalow in California. He spent all day watching his old films: what he regretted most wasn't the money, but the fact he'd lost control of his movies and the studio had recut them. All the bits of business that Laurel had choreographed had gone, cut down to 45 minutes of slapstick. Chaplin kept his own copyright. He had control of every foot of film he made.

Never give up

That's the big lesson of The Day Off. After being rejected by Hancock and spending 50 years in a filing cabinet, it's been optioned as a film. So you never know what will happen.

• The Day Off will be read by a full cast including Kevin Eldon and Morvenne Banks at the London comedy film festival at BFI Southbank on 29 January, followed by a Q&A with Ray Galton and Alan Simpson. Details: locofilmfestival.com
One of my favourite London venues is the BFI on the Southbank so it was a great treat to be going there on a cold but sunny Sunday afternoon (nothing to hate about this particular Sunday). Andy Clayden and I, along with the missuses, luckily managed to park right on Waterloo Bridge with wonderful views. On one side is St Paul’s and the Gherkin and on the other the Houses of Parliament, Big Ben and the London Eye. The purpose was to see the world premiere performance of the ‘lost’ Galton and Simpson script “The Day Off”. This was the last thing that they wrote for Hancock and he turned it down. It has been widely reported that this script has sat in Ray Galton’s basement filing cabinet for 50 years (see the story of this in Entertaining Mister Hancock on opposite page).

We had arrived two hours early to meet up with Dan Pear, Dryden Pennington and other familiar faces from our august society. Well they’re a cut above the type you meet down the pub. We all met in the Riverfront bar overlooking the Thames and had a good chat, laugh and joke until it was time for the performance. We took our seats in the buzzing and packed auditorium, to watch the play being performed by a cast of seven members of LoCo as part of the London Comedy Film Festival. Tom Goodman-Hill played the part of Tony and I could see how Hancock would have dealt with these lines. It was a wonderful performance and afterwards we were privileged to have a Q&A session with Ray and Alan, interviewed by Emma Kennedy who had been the narrator of the play, and Tom Goodwin-Hill also joined them on the stage. During the change-over I had nipped out for a comfort break and missed part of the conversation but it appears that two people from the BFI and one other have optioned (we thought they said auctioned) the script to become a film. I don’t know what this means but I do hope it means that a film will be made. Who’ll play the part of Hancock?

Christopher Stevens, author of “The Masters of Sitcom”, has been recorded as discovering the script in Ray’s basement. But Alan was generous enough to credit the THAS long term archivist, Malcolm Chapman as first discovering it; Malcolm consequently told Christopher where to look. Certainly in the book it is stated that the uncut script would probably run close to three hours and the seven page excerpt reproduced in it was not performed during this performance. It leaves us to wonder what else might come up in future.

A couple of anecdotes spoken on stage are worth a mention. Hancock had wanted to appear in a musical and had singing lessons. Galton and Simpson wrote a musical for him but always knew that he would never be able to sing and dance so that never happened. The conversation turned to Steptoe and Son and interviewer Emma had read a story that she so wanted to be true. Apparently Prime Minister of the day, Harold Wilson, was a fan and put forward Harry H Corbett’s name for an OBE. However the middle H was inadvertently dropped and so the honour went to Sooty’s puppeteer Harry Corbett instead. Galton and Simpson said that this was perfectly true.

As usual, with those two, there was so much wonderful discussion but as a film was due to be shown in NFT1 it had to come to an end. Alan finished by saying of Ray “these days he helps me up the stairs and I tell him what day it is”.

You can’t follow that so we went back to the bridge, enjoyed the lights on the Thames and went home happy after a superb day off. Sorry out!
On Wednesday February 1st 2012 BBC Radio 2 broadcast a one-hour celebration of the career of veteran presenter Brian Matthew.

Although Brian is mainly associated with music, as presenter of “Saturday Club” and “Thank Your Lucky Stars” and currently “Sounds of the 60s”, his long and varied career has included a period as a staff radio announcer during the mid 1950s. In that role he was responsible for “topping and tailing” many of the recordings of “Hancock’s Half Hour”. The tribute included two brief but possibly contentious references to Tony, which should be of interest to society members.

In the first Brian provided a rarely heard duty announcer’s perspective on “Hancock’s Half Hour” and commented on how he got on with the members of the cast.

The second is more of a passing observation in which the presenter of “The Brian Matthew Story”, James Mols, reading Russell Davies’s script, remarks on what he feels to be the similarity of Brian Matthew’s voice in the 1950s to that of Hancock.

The following is a transcript of the relevant parts of the programme. I have also sent a complete copy of “The Brian Matthew Story” on CD to Mick Dawson for inclusion in the audio library.

HANCOCK REFERENCE ONE

James Mols (Reading Russell Davies’s script):

Brian even participated in one of the most famous comedy intros of them all...

Brian Matthew: (From 1950s archive recording):

We present Tony Hancock, Bill Kerr, Sid James, André Melly and Kenneth Williams in...

Tony: HH Hancock’s Half Hour...

Brian Matthew: (Recent interview):

Tony was er...peculiar to say the least and everybody else was quite wonderful. I got very friendly with Kenneth Williams and also with Sid James er...not with Tony. He’d come in solitary and sit huddled and grumble about the script. Sit there...”Blah Blah, That’s not funny...Blah Blah won’t...not gonna laugh at that.” So I talked to the two writers about (it). I said, “Doesn’t it worry you when he (does that)?” They said, “No, he does that every week but you wait until he gets going with the audience there. We know what’ll get a laugh.” And, of course, they did.

HANCOCK REFERENCE TWO

James Mols (Reading Russell Davies’s script):

He (Brian Matthew) was quite the cheeky chap onstage and vocally I thought there was just a slight resemblance to Tony Hancock—another midlander.

(Brian Matthew was born in Coventry)

Thanks to all the following for their contributions in this issue:

Ken Clarke, John Thomson, Dan Peat, Ted masters, Steve O’Sullivan, Roger Browne, Russell Bowman, Howard Spencer, Terry Capper, Les Creighton, Jonathan Street, Ian Payne, Nigel Parkinson, Martin Gibbons, Mick Dawson, Michael West, Jeff Hammond and Malcolm Chapman

JUNE 16

The next issue of The Missing Page is due out in July. All contributions for inclusion should be sent to the Editor (at his address on page 3 this issue) by the above date.