

## **HANCOCK'S HALF HOUR COLLECTIBLES**

### **Notes to accompany Volume 2**

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The Tony Hancock Appreciation Society is delighted to have given its support to the production of this new and unique series concerning the lost or rare work of, and related to, Tony Hancock, one of our greatest comedians.



*Tony Hancock, 1951*

### **The Tony Hancock Appreciation Society (THAS)**

Since its inception in 1976, the THAS and its many allies have been at the forefront of efforts to find, preserve and promote the works of Tony Hancock.

As detailed in the previous volume of this series, this toil has, over the decades, yielded innumerable discoveries of work by Hancock that was previously believed to have been lost. The result is that the THAS now has the most extensive archive of Hancock's stage, radio, television, and film work in the world. In addition, we have myriad recorded items related to his career, such

as interviews and documentaries featuring Hancock, his colleagues and friends. Each offers valuable insights into his life and work. It is this extensive collection, combined principally with that of Ted Kendall, the noted sound engineer and media researcher, and the contents of the BBC Sound Archives, that have enabled the publication of *Hancock's Half Hour Collectibles*.

It is natural for modern audiences to question why broadcast material is missing from the period in which Hancock was ascendant from the late 40s until 1968. As many readers may know, this issue has, in fact, affected the legacy of numerous performers, programmes and broadcasts; and this phenomenon is by no means limited to the BBC, the United Kingdom, or indeed, the period during which Hancock was active.

These notes are not the place to discuss the causes for these absences from the archives at length; numerous academic papers have been written on the matter. The reasons are myriad, but to consider some but briefly: early radio shows such as those with Hancock were typically broadcast live and never recorded. If they were preserved, they were recorded onto acetate discs. These were particularly prone to natural deterioration and accidental harm in any event. Furthermore, as several discs would be required to preserve just a 30 minute show, any damage to one would essentially render the rest redundant, especially as the aluminium core of the discs were a valuable component that could be recycled so other shows could be recorded. Additionally, the potential costs of their physical storage were difficult to justify within the BBC as it sought to manage license money in a responsible way during post-war austerity. Lastly, broadcasters of the period could not foresee that programmes such as *Hancock's Half Hour* (and many others) would later be deemed irreplaceable classic examples of British history and culture, let alone comedy per se. Consequently, it is easy, in retrospect, to see why so many broadcasts were lost or destroyed.

It should also be borne in mind that home recording – the fruits of which have done so much to remedy gaps in broadcast archives over the decades – was still in its formative stages in the early 1950s, both in terms of quantity and quality. As Ted Kendall has observed based on decades of interrogating such material, it is notable that audio recordings of many genres that hail from the latter half of this decade are more plentiful, and are of a greater standard, than those from the first. This was commonly because the recordings from the early period were made by placing the microphone next to the speaker, which leads to irreparable audio interference. Later, many home recordists learnt to avoid this by hard-wiring the process (typically, soldering an audio lead from their reel-to-reel tape machine into the radio or television).

The result of these archive policies and technical limitations meant that much of Hancock's early broadcast work for the BBC is missing, presumed lost. Prior to 1954, only a handful of his appearances survive. Hancock first featured on radio, aged just 17, on 6 June 1941, in a regional variety show called *A La Carte*. Whilst some devotees still hold out hope that this may reside in a dusty cupboard somewhere, it was never recorded by the BBC and the chances of a home recording being made are one in a million (which, we optimistically suppose, and to echo Jim Carrey from *Dumb and Dumber*, means 'there's still a chance!').

Hancock's next radio performance was on *Variety Bandbox* on 9 January 1949. He subsequently made well over 100 appearances in the medium before the advent of *Hancock's Half Hour* in late 1954. Thankfully, a significant number of episodes featuring him on *Calling All Forces* from this period have survived and are in the *Collectibles* sets. However, we have been less fortunate with series such as *Variety Bandbox*, *Forces All Star Bill*, *Star Bill*, *Educating Archie*, *Happy-Go-Lucky*, *Workers' Playtime*, *Variety Ahoy*, *Henry Hall's Guest Night* and numerous other shows. Only two sketches from *Star Bill*, and sole shows from *Educating Archie* and *Variety Bandbox*, survive of these. These can be heard on the first volume of *Hancock's Half Hour Collectibles*.

In terms of Hancock's most famous body of radio work for the BBC, as of January 2018, 21 episodes of *Hancock's Half Hour* are entirely missing, all from the first three series. Four additional shows exist in very sub-optimal states. We have a poor quality fragment of *The New Year Resolutions* (3/12, 4 January 1956) that lasts a meagre 5 minutes. We also have equally intolerable – if full – copies of *The Diet* (3/8, 7 December 1955) and *How Hancock Won The War*

(3/16, 1 February 1956). All of these recordings come from off-air efforts using the mic to speaker method described above.

One of the strangest gaps in the archive is that of the fourth series show, *Sid James's Dad* (4/3, 28 October 1956). By this time, the programme was being consistently preserved in the BBC Sound Archives and was being picked up by Transcription Services for sale abroad. In addition, home recordings were much more common at this point. Over the years, the THAS has regularly acquired tape collections, both large and small, that feature contemporary recordings from this and subsequent series (it is by virtue of these that we have so many recently discovered full off-air versions that appear in *Hancock's Half Hour Collectibles*).



*Sid James and Tony Hancock. Production shot from the television show The Two Murderers, 2 October 1959. Tony and Sid realise to their disgust that each suspected the other of plotting a dark deed*

However, *Sid James's Dad* was not kept by the BBC and, to date, the only home recording we have located is of extremely poor quality. Of all the lost radio episodes, this is the one for which the THAS holds out its greatest hope of recovering; we think it inconceivable that a decent quality off-air copy was never made at the time. Of course, assuming this is true, finding it is quite another matter. A full list of the missing radio shows can be found on our website at <http://www.tonyhancock.org.uk/episode-guide/missing-episodes>. Please contact us if you have one

of these or, perhaps, if you have recently come across a collection of reel-to-reel tapes that might have been owned by someone making home tape recordings from the radio during the 1950s (see details below). The THAS would be more than happy to do an analysis of your recording or collection.

It should be pointed out at this juncture that, in an effort unique in the field of lost broadcasts, each missing radio episode of *Hancock's Half Hour* has been remade as part of Neil Pearson's *The Missing Hancocks* project (apart from the second version of *Cinderella Hancock* [3/11, 28 December 1955], since this was itself a remake of an earlier show that has survived). The venture sees Kevin McNally, of *Pirates of the Caribbean* fame, take on the role of Hancock, who is a personal hero of the actor. The performances of both McNally and the rest of *The Missing Hancocks* cast have been rightly lauded, and the series have all been both critical and commercial successes. Thanks to the efforts of Pearson, McNally et al, Hancock fans can hear every missing script performed professionally and as originally written. These include those episodes where Hancock was missing due to a nervous breakdown (the first three shows of the second series) and Harry Secombe deputised for his war-time friend.



A production shot from the television show *The Horror Serial*, 1959, which was completely lost until the soundtrack was discovered in 2016. Tony Hancock and Sid James discuss the former's fears of a Martian invasion after watching *Quatermass and the Pit*

Touchingly, Secombe's part in *The Missing Hancocks* is played by his son, Andrew. Three series of remakes have now been recorded and broadcast on BBC Radio 4. As of the time of writing, the fourth and final series is nearly complete and will be heard in 2018. All the extant series are available to buy as either CDs or downloads from BBC Audio. As the THAS has spent over 40 years trying to redress the consequences of lost or wiped Hancock broadcasts, it might be thought that the pace of discovery would have slowed in recent years. This is not the case, however. For example, the past two years of our hunting has yielded previously forgotten recordings of *Happy-Go-Lucky* from 1951. This was the first radio show written by Galton and Simpson and it was the reason they met Hancock, who appeared in a regular sketch in the show. Sadly, none of these recordings feature him – although he is name-checked in some of the closing credits – but they provide an invaluable insight into the very earliest stages of his writers-to-be.

The THAS and Ted Kendall have also recently discovered numerous off-air recordings of *Hancock's Half Hour*, all of which feature in this series, as do the newly-found soundtracks of two lost television shows, *The Italian Maid* and *The Horror Serial*.

Similarly, there have been myriad finds of non-BBC performances, such as the soundtrack of Hancock's appearance on *The Eamonn Andrews Show* on 14 January 1968, alongside Michael Bentine, Christopher Lee, Jacqueline Susann and Engelbert Humperdinck. This is, to date, the only known surviving example in any medium of Hancock appearing on a chat show with other guests.

One of the most spectacular discoveries was the full footage of Hancock's last ever television broadcast (up to this point, we only had a poor soundtrack). On 12 June 1968, Channel HSV7 in Melbourne broadcast *Something Special – Nancye*, hosted by the Australian entertainer, Nancye Hayes. Hancock did a 10-minute performance largely drawn from his stage show, featuring elements such as the *Gaumont News* sketch that he had first performed in the early 1950s. The show was actually recorded in October 1967 – it is not clear why it was not shown until several months later – and its eventual airing took place just a few days before Hancock's death.

Indeed, the discoveries the THAS has made recently are much more numerous than even those discussed herein. Again, many involve television appearances that were not for the BBC. As such, they do not feature in this series, but fans should be assured that each is safe in our archive. In conclusion, Hancock aficionados should be clear on two very key points.

The search for lost material continues and our efforts demonstrate it is highly likely that new discoveries remain feasible. We have yielded shows from many different sources: eBay, private collections, the British Library and, indeed, our own archives (where they were misplaced). If any reader thinks he or she can help with this effort, please contact our Archivist at [archive@tonyhancock.org.uk](mailto:archive@tonyhancock.org.uk)

### **Detailed Programme Notes**

#### ***Hancock's Half Hour: The New Secretary (4/5)***

**Featuring Bill Kerr, Sidney James, Hattie Jacques, Kenneth Williams and Alan Simpson**

**First broadcast on BBC Light Programme, 11 November 1956**

This episode was the first to feature Hattie Jacques in her memorable role as Miss Grizelda Pugh, Hancock's secretary and/or bête noire. It is widely accepted that her involvement in the programme had a hugely positive effect on its popularity, and many episodes that are now considered *Hancock's Half Hour* classics – such as *Cyrano de Hancock*, *Last of the McHancocks*, *Sunday Afternoon at Home*, *The Wild Man of the Woods* and *Hancock's Happy Christmas* – feature her in pivotal and memorable performances.



*Bill Kerr, Kenneth Williams, Tony Hancock, Hattie Jacques and Sid James  
Official BBC publicity picture marking the start of the fifth radio series of Hancock's Half Hour in 1958*

Galton and Simpson frequently stated that they had difficulty writing for women. In a 2009 interview with Alex Musson for *Mustard Magazine*, the writers said:

*'All our feed lines from our women characters were uninteresting. Our first leading lady was Geraldine McEwan. She was 21 then [this was a reference to the forerunner of Hancock's Half Hour, Star Bill, broadcast in 1953]. The second, Moira Lister, put up with it for a couple of years then said 'you don't really need me'. Our third leading lady was Andrée Melly, George Melly's sister. She started off French because of her Christian name, then in the next series turned up with a cut-glass English accent. Nobody noticed. Then she got fed up and left. We weren't very good at writing for women, and Tony Hancock wasn't very good being around women, as such, until we got Hattie Jacques. She was magic as far as we were concerned. We could write for her, whereas we couldn't really write for the usual good-looking romantic interest sort... couldn't do that. Hattie was a very funny woman.'*

Indeed she was. Josephine Edwina Jaques was born in February 1922. After an unremarkable school career and spells in amateur theatricals, she made her first professional appearance in 1944 in a revue called *Late Joys* at Players' Theatre (adding a 'c' to her surname in the process). She rapidly became a mainstay of the theatre's acting company and, indeed, made both her television and film debuts in 1946. It was at this time she adopted the nickname 'Hattie'. This was the result of a remark made by a stage hand when she was appearing blacked-up for a minstrel show (he likened her to Hattie McDaniel, of *Gone with the Wind* fame). Hattie's path towards working with Hancock began in September 1947, when she joined the cast of one of the leading radio comedy shows, *It's That Man Again*, better known as *ITMA*. She played the role of Sophie Tuckshop, a greedy schoolgirl whose tales of gargantuan eating would be terminated by Hattie's

catchphrase: '*But I'm all right now*'. Following the unexpected death of the show's star, Tommy Handley, in January 1949, *ITMA* ended prematurely and Hattie moved on to the first series of *Educating Archie*, featuring Peter Brough and his schoolboy ventriloquist dummy, Archie Andrews. This commenced in June 1950, with Hattie playing love-interest Agatha Dinglebody. She appeared alongside Archie's teacher, played by Robert Moreton, who had performed with Hancock during the war in Ralph Reader's Gang Show Number 3.

Following Moreton's departure from the show after the end of the first series in December 1950, it was Hancock who took over duties of Archie's long-suffering educator. This was the first time that Hancock and Hattie worked together. The second series of *Educating Archie* began on 3 August 1951 and concluded on 25 January 1952 (during this time, the stars also appeared in *The Archie Andrews Christmas Party* at the Prince of Wales Theatre over the festive period). To date, only one recording of this second series has been known to survive (2/12, broadcast 19 October 1951); it can be found on the first volume of *Hancock's Half Hour Collectibles*.

This constitutes the earliest known recording of Hattie and Hancock appearing together since, as we understand it, no other shows from this series were preserved by the BBC. For historians of this period of radio comedy, the apparent loss of the rest of this series is particularly frustrating. *Educating Archie* was enormously popular (at its height, each show averaged 15 million listeners).

As such, the hope has been that some off-air recordings might have been made at the time and will come to light. As ever, if any readers of these notes might be aware of such material, please contact the THAS. Thankfully, the THAS recently located the entire set of *Educating Archie* scripts (from Peter Brough's private archive): these were painstakingly copied and can be accessed through our website, giving fans a significant insight into a key stage in Hancock's burgeoning radio career.

After the end of the second series of *Educating Archie* in January 1952, Hancock departed, but he and Hattie appeared together on an edition of *Calling All Forces* on 28 April 1952. Although the *Hancock's Half Hour Collectibles* series features many of Hancock's performances from this series, this specific broadcast is, sadly, currently missing from the archives. As far as we are aware, it would not be until nearly four years later that they would work with each other again. This would be on Hancock's first television series – *The Tony Hancock Show* – for Associated Rediffusion Television. Hattie appeared in the last show of the first series, broadcast on 1 June 1956. Although the records are unclear, it is believed this was instrumental in her joining the *Hancock's Half Hour* cast. It has been said that Galton and Simpson wanted to cast a 'funny woman' and move away from the semi-girlfriend role that had been played by McEwen, Lister and Melly. Reportedly, the matter was discussed with the *Hancock's Half Hour* producer, Dennis Main Wilson, and Hattie was the unanimous choice.

When the BBC first released the entire surviving episodes of the fourth series of *Hancock's Half Hour* in 2002, *The New Secretary* was absent from the CD set. At that time, the only version of this script that was known to have survived was the remake made for Transcription Services in 1958. Happily, the original was found in 2005 in the possession of Vic Rogers, who had recorded it on first transmission for a work colleague who regularly missed shows because of the timing of his shifts. Incredibly, Vic also had an original recording of another lost show: *The Blackboard Jungle*. A remastered version of this episode can be found in Volume 1 of this series.

*The New Secretary* was issued on CD in the late 2000s alongside *The Blackboard Jungle* in a special one-off release. Ted Kendall was not involved in this project, and despite the best efforts by others at the time, the end result suffered from the sub-optimal use of hiss-reduction software. The source tape had issues not just with hum, but also with hiss and speed instability. These have now been addressed as far as possible in the version in this collection.

***Hancock's Half Hour: Anna and the King of Siam (4/7)***

**Featuring Bill Kerr, Sidney James, Hattie Jacques, Kenneth Williams, Ray Galton, Alan Simpson and Max Harris (piano)**

**First broadcast on BBC Light Programme, 25 November 1956**

The fourth series of *Hancock's Half Hour* commenced broadcast on 14 October 1956, several months after Hattie appeared in the first series of *The Tony Hancock Show*, which, as mentioned above, seemed to have played a key role in her joining the programme. However, the first four shows of this season (*Back from Holiday*, *The Bolshoi Ballet*, *Sid James's Dad* and *The Income Tax Demand*) do not feature Hattie. This was because she was pregnant with her second child, Kim, who was born on 12 October 1956, in between the recording of the first two episodes.



*Hattie Jacques, Tony Hancock and Sid James. Official BBC publicity picture from 1958 marking the start of the fifth radio series of Hancock's Half Hour*

After Hattie's debut in *The New Secretary* – the fifth show of the series – *Anna and the King of Siam* would be the third to feature her. It is one of Galton and Simpson's celebrated parodies of a contemporary film or musical. The target in this case was the film *The King and I*, which opened in the summer of 1956 and starred Yul Brynner and Deborah Kerr. The film was based upon Margaret Landon's novel *Anna and the King of Siam* (1944). This, in turn, had been inspired by the autobiographical work by Anna Leonowens, *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*, which was first published in 1870. A stage version of the work was also running at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane around this time: it began in October 1953 and ran for 946 performances.

Interestingly, five days after this show's transmission, Hattie featured in the second edition of the second series of *The Tony Hancock Show* on 30 November 1956. However, as with Bill Kerr and Kenneth Williams, she never transitioned into *Hancock's Half Hour* on television in any significant way. She appeared in only six episodes; regrettably, only one of these – *The Cruise*, in which she steals her scenes as the 'Amorous Lady' – survives. In the six television shows she participated in, only one – *The New Neighbour* – sees her playing the role of Hancock's secretary (but not named as Grizelda Pugh). This episode was remade in 2016 as part of the BBC's celebration of sixty years of television sitcoms (that is, since the commencement of *Hancock's Half Hour* on the small screen).

Although Galton and Simpson felt that the introduction of Hattie to the show cracked their difficulties in writing for a woman, some consideration has to be given to a degree of controversy that has arisen about her treatment and, specifically, references to her weight and size. *Hancock's Half Hour* has survived in terms of popularity not just due to the unsurpassable writing and incredible performances, but because, irrespective of certain contemporary references that date the broadcasts, the style of comedy presented – based so strongly on character and situation – has a certain timeless quality to it. Many other such radio and television shows have faded in relevance and popularity because, on playback years later, the comedy comes across as very formulaic, naive or 'of its time'. More seriously, certain aspects of these shows – for example, their treatment of racial issues – are simply unacceptable to modern ears. With this in mind, we have to acknowledge that a repeated aspect of *Hancock's Half Hour* scripts after Hattie Jacques arrived was reference to her physical appearance – 'fat-shaming', as it is now referred to. Consequently, it has been argued that as the show features such humour, it both limits its enduring appeal and causes it to fall foul of the 'of its time' accusation.

It should be pointed out that Hancock himself was a constant target of jokes about his weight and appearance throughout the entire run of the show, both on radio and television. Admittedly, finding humour after this fashion may be seen now as completely unacceptable, irrespective of the subject of such remarks. Hattie herself apparently complained about it at one point during rehearsals for an episode of series (this was mentioned in Kenneth Williams' autobiography, *Just Williams*). Again, for the sake of context, it must be stressed that Hattie was not uniquely slighted in this way. Indeed, if anything, Hancock suffered far worse. In a recent thread on the THAS Facebook group, a number of insulting nicknames for the Lad were recalled from the shows, such as Claret Conk, Beery Nose, Tub, Fat Legs, Puddin', Kippers, Big Feet and Fatty. Moreover, there are sustained exchanges between the cast in multiple shows in which Hancock's weight and appearance are grossly demeaned, such as in *The Last Bus Home*, when Sid refers to him being 'covered in blubber'. Whether or not we like this form of humour – or can forgive or tolerate it in light of the cultural norms that applied in the 1950s – it would be unfair to characterise the treatment of Hattie's size as something unique or, indeed, misogynistic.

Max Harris, who features on piano in this episode, became a noted musical arranger and composer. His first appearance on the BBC was *Jazz Club* in 1950; during this decade, apart from writing advertising jingles, he composed arrangements for major visiting stars such as Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald. He is best remembered for writing the theme tunes to classic television shows such as *Porridge*, *Doomwatch*, *Poldark* and *Open All Hours*.

A version of this show has been extant since the 1970s, but the recording we had was of average quality and the opening was truncated. This recording is taken from a new source. A few years ago, Ted Kendall bought a box of tapes which yielded many episodes of *Hancock's Half Hour* and *The Navy Lark*. Unlike previous sources, this tape was a first generation off-air recording rather than a copy, and had been made on a domestic machine of good quality. The unusual opening, one of very few not to use the Hancock theme, was also present, which was not the case with any previously available recording. Some problems with hiss and speed variation had to be sorted out, but the end result is a considerable improvement on the previous issue.

***Hancock's Half Hour: The Stolen Petrol (4/9)***

**Featuring Bill Kerr, Sidney James, Hattie Jacques, Kenneth Williams, Ray Galton and Alan Simpson**

**First broadcast on BBC Light Programme, 9 December 1956**

This show again reveals the ability of Galton and Simpson to respond quickly to contemporary events, although in this case there was a long background to the introduction of petrol rationing that forms the basis of the plot.

The Suez Crisis had been building for some years, as the increasingly independent Egyptian government led by General Nassar looked to throw off the yoke of colonial control. This led to the nationalisation of the strategically crucial Suez Canal in July 1956. The culmination of this tension was the disastrous attack on Egypt by British and French forces on 31 October 1956. In response to this, the Egyptian forces sank 40 ships in the Canal; it would not be open to shipping again for several months. Supplies of oil from the Middle East dried up and fuel shortages plagued Europe as a result.



*Sid James, Tony Hancock and Bill Kerr. Official BBC publicity picture for the first radio series of Hancock's Half Hour, 1954*

On 29 November 1956, the UK government announced that petrol rationing would be imposed for four months from 17 December. Coupon books – a hallmark of wartime rationing – were once again issued to citizens. Petrol supplies were cut by 10% and monthly limitations were placed on access to fuel. Normal car users were allowed 200 miles' worth of petrol. Businesses were given an extra 100 miles' allowance. Farmers, religious ministers, and essential local authority workers were allowed 600 miles a month. Physicians, midwives, disabled drivers and vets had unrestricted allowances. The closure of garages at the weekend became the norm; even when open, they rationed petrol to just a couple of gallons per visitor. One garage owner said:

*"We are almost afraid to serve our regular customers. When motorists saw a car being filled they stopped and waited. In five minutes we had a queue of 50 cars waiting, and had to turn them all away."*

All these experiences are represented in *The Stolen Petrol*. As the crisis persisted, petrol rationing was frequently referred to in subsequent shows in this series. For example, in *The Diary* (30 December 1956), 'Mad' Jack Hancock expresses concern that his lion, Raja, has '*chewed his petrol coupons up*'. Hancock refers to his 'supplementary' coming through in *The Old School Reunion* (20 January 1957), having falsely claimed he is running a haulage business. A week later, in *The Wild Man of the Woods* (27 January 1957) he is surprised that the cost of petrol Sid is selling him is way above the even inflated prices of the time (Sid explains that the price of hose-pipes and mouth washes need to be factored in). Petrol rationing ended on 14 May 1957.

This episode was thought to be missing when the BBC released all the known surviving *Hancock's Half Hours* from Series 4 in the early 2000s. It had not survived in the BBC Sound Archives and was not selected for copying by Transcription Services. It might be assumed that this was due to the parochial nature of the show, but earlier episodes that also revolved around very specific contemporary issues – such as *The Rail Strike* from the second series in 1955 – survived in Transcription Services. The reasons for its original loss may never be known.

However, in truth, *The Stolen Petrol* exists in three versions. The first had circulated among collectors and various Hancock societies in the 1970s. It was a multi-generation copy of an indifferent original and is intelligible, but little more. As such, it was not appropriate for inclusion in the commercial releases of the early 2000s. The second version surfaced during the BBC's Treasure Hunt of 2001, a nationwide campaign to find lost broadcasts. Whilst of much better quality, it suffers from intrusive clicks, heterodyne whistles and Morse transmissions, besides occasional dropouts. This is the recording that eventually made its way into the commercial releases of the 2000s and beyond. A few years ago, Ted Kendall found a third version in a box of tapes bought on an auction site, sold with the machine which made them. The recording prepared for this issue is a composite of the second and third sources, albeit after a large amount of manual work to clear out the interference.

### ***Hancock's Half Hour: The Espresso Bar (4/10)***

**Featuring Bill Kerr, Sidney James, Hattie Jacques, Kenneth Williams, Ray Galton and Alan Simpson**

**First broadcast on BBC Light Programme, 16 December 1956**

In this episode, struggling for theatrical work, Hancock decides to open a coffee bar, the craze for which revolutionised London in the 1950s. We are indebted to Dr Matthew Partington, formerly of the University of the West of England, who wrote a fascinating paper in 2008 called 'The London Coffee Bar of the 1950s – teenage occupation of an amateur space?' for the context his research provides for this show. The first modern coffee bar to be established was the *Moka Bar* on Frith Street in Soho in 1952. Its founder – an Italian named Pino Riservato – owned the rights to a new coffee machine, the Gaggia Espresso. It was a hit, and by the end of the decade, it was estimated that there were at least 500 such establishments in London alone.

Their appeal worked on many fronts. One key attraction was their independent look and culture, which was a far cry from the drab and uniform tea shops and milk bars that typified the British high street at the time (these, of course, frequently feature in *Hancock's Half Hour*). They were also highly profitable. Although coffee machines were expensive – hundreds of pounds – such establishments did not serve alcohol. Without the need for the requisite liquor license, they could stay open late. This, combined with a reputation for good food and a welcoming atmosphere for both the old and young, meant they could make excellent returns in a relatively short space of time.

One notable aspect of the coffee bar was that they were often linked to innovation by amateurs as opposed to professional caterers. This was associated with idiosyncratic and quirky designs which stood out boldly in 1950s Britain. In September 1955, writing in *Architectural Review*, the architect Stephen Gardiner stated:

*“It shouldn't be assumed that I mean that the modern architect or interior designer is incapable of designing a good coffee bar: what I do mean is that he does not always understand the problem, and what he has designed - simple, plain, functional - fails because it is essentially humourless: El Cubano on the other hand [which opened in 1955 in Knightsbridge], does understand what is wanted and while it may be in some eyes vulgar, flashy and a fake, it still does succeed”.*



*Tony Hancock and Bill Kerr. Official BBC publicity picture for the first radio series of Hancock's Half Hour, 1954*

This is entirely in line with the developments in this episode, of course. Whilst many plot turns and concepts in *Hancock's Half Hour* are comically absurd – such as Hancock farming at Lord's cricket ground in *Agricultural 'Ancock* – the idea of a theatrical nobody turning his hand to opening a coffee bar was entirely in keeping with their growth and culture. Indeed, in support of this view, Dr Partington himself quotes from *The Espresso Bar* in his paper: when Bill inquires how they can find the money to open the venture, Hancock replies:

*'That's just it, you don't need any – the worse the place is the better. That's the vogue these days, find yourself a dirty old cellar, get a couple of barrels and a long plank, candles in bottles and you're in business'.*

Reference to espresso bars had made been made in previous episodes of *Hancock's Half Hour*. For example, over a year earlier in *The Bequest* (3/3, 2 November 1955), Hancock is in search of a wife so he can meet the terms of his late uncle's will and claim an inheritance. When Bill says he can effect some introductions, Hancock replies:

*'I am not interested in espresso bar hang-about. They're all the same – horse's tails and trousers. Straight from Tropicana Chelsea. A good meal would kill 'em'.*

After *The Stolen Petrol*, coffee bars are the subject of more detailed discussion among the characters. In *Fred's Pie Stall* (10 November 1959), when Sid suggests the impending closure of their favourite horse-drawn haunt will require them to frequent coffee bars, Hancock angrily responds:

*'Never! I hate those things, Sid. 'The El Corrida', 'The Tropicana', 'The El Granada', all those horrible plants creeping up the walls. Bamboo canes. Plastic cactuses. They're all leaves and froth, those places. And the grub? Nothing British in there at all. 'Shish kebab á la Constantinople'. 'Omelette Valençiana'. In Cheam High Street, mark you! Can't even get a roll and butter, it's 'croissant au beurre'. Pardon me for living, I'm sure. And the waitresses: Pony tails and their brother's sweaters, that's them. Black-stockinged fools. Sitting there with their green finger-nails, and their omnibus edition of Ibsen....got no time for 'em. Show me the piece of apple strudel that compares with one of Fred's stale cheese cakes.'*

Readers might be interested to know that a full off-air recording of *Fred's Pie Stall*, featuring lost material, will appear in a future volume in this series. Another notable nod to coffee bars occurs in one of the very last radio episodes, *The Poetry Society*. Hancock, snubbing Sid's establishment of choice – *'That's bourgeois, that is'* – says that he and his new bohemian friends *'go to the one done up like a graveyard'*. Again, this is entirely based upon the real world of the coffee craze and not an invention of the writers. As Dr Partington points out:

*'At Le Macabre coffee bar in Soho, 'you could have your coffee on a coffin in a cobweb-festooned house of horrors, wearing sunglasses at night whilst having earnest discussions about the difference between Jean Paul Sartre and Dizzy Gillespie'. In a 1958 Pathé short film titled It's the Age of the Teenager, the interior of Le Macabre is featured and a teenager boldly states, 'this is us see, we're today, if you don't dig us, shoot away to some square joint with the rest of the creeps'. The teenagers had appropriated Le Macabre as a place to be and in direct contrast to a 'square joint' where the older generation might congregate. Teenagers identifying with coffee bar features such as the death related décor of Le Macabre were actively consuming a new type of brand identity which they were partly responsible for and partly responding to.'*

These contemporary observations from 1958 mirror completely the exchange in *The Poetry Society*, which was recorded just a few months later in June 1959 (although it was not broadcast until 8 December 1959).

The coffee bar also features in a much loved scene from Hancock's 1961 film, *The Rebel*. His request for a cappuccino with *'no froth'* causes consternation amongst the staff, played by those stalwarts of the 'Hancock Repertory Company', Elizabeth Frazer and Mario Fabrizi.

A version of *The Espresso Bar* has been extant for many years; it still exists in the form of a tape master of the Transcription Services issue. However, this had several edits that had been made after first transmission, when material would be excised for reasons of timing, taste and topicality. Normally, this 'covering material' would be placed at the end of the reel, but this was not the case with this show.

As mentioned earlier, a few years ago Ted Kendall acquired a box of tapes which contained an original off-air recording of *Anna and the King of Siam*. Incredibly, it also featured one of *The Espresso Bar*. This forms the basis for the recording in this collection.

However, this source was not without its problems. Although of decent quality, it was recorded on acetate tape stock which was brittle and losing its coating in patches. It did not help that previous breakages had been repaired with ordinary Sellotape™, whose adhesive had oozed. Luckily, the relevant passages, including the domestic announcements, were retrievable. The version contained herein is a composite of the off-air version and the original.

### **Extract from *Calling All Forces***

**Featuring Charlie Chester, Arthur Askey, Edna Fryer and Stanley Black and his dance orchestra**

### **First broadcast on BBC Light Programme, 14 April 1952**

*Calling All Forces* was a variety programme aimed at military personnel based around the UK and Germany. It was first broadcast on 3 December 1950 and ran through to 28 July 1952, a total of 87 editions in as many weeks. The show was originally hosted by Ted Ray (with Richard Murdoch deputising twice).

The show was written by Bob Monkhouse and Dennis Goodwin. Monkhouse commented in his radio show *The Monkhouse Files* broadcast in 2000 that, as a 23-year-old writer, he was very lucky to be able to write such a high profile programme having previously only written for two radio series (*Hip Hip Hoo Roy* with Derek Roy and *It's a Great Life* for Bonar Colleano). Fortuitously, the producer of these shows, Leslie Bridgmont, who had been tasked with creating a one hour variety show for the Forces, approached Monkhouse and Goodwin. They went on to write all but the last six episodes, which were written by Ray Galton and Alan Simpson. In a conversation with Simpson in 2015, he recalled that this arrangement came about without any real warning. Goodwin and Monkhouse announced their sudden departure as a *fait accompli*. By this time, though, Galton and Simpson had established themselves with the BBC as 'go-to' writers in such circumstances.

Hancock appeared in two early shows as the guest star with Ted Ray as host (see *Hancock's Half Hour Collectibles Vol 1*). However, towards the latter end of the run, Charlie Chester and Hancock became the show's joint hosts. The two shows in this collection comprise Hancock's first and fourth appearances as co-host with Chester.

In both episodes, listeners will notice that Hancock takes on the role as con-man, trying to hoodwink Chester. This is, of course, the complete opposite of his role in the future *Hancock's Half Hour*, where he is always on the receiving end of deception, usually at the hands of Sid James. It is also notable that Hancock appears as a lothario. In *The Monkhouse Files*, Bob recalled that both of these roles were imposed upon him and Goodwin at Hancock's behest. For the modern listener – fully aware of the downtrodden role Hancock later played in *Hancock's Half Hour* – it seems strange to hear the Lad portrayed in such a way.

The extracts presented here comprise three sections from Hancock's (and Charlie Chester's) first show as co-compères. Initially, Hancock arrives with his suitcases and interrupts Charlie's opening patter; they determine how they are going to be friends.



*Charlie Chester, Hancock's co-host on Calling All Forces, pictured here in 1956*

The second extract featuring Hancock immediately follows 'The Memory Man' (Leslie Welch) section of the show. Welch's act involved answering questions sent in by listeners about sport. This was genuinely unrehearsed and his memory of the minutiae of sporting facts was quite incredible. In this extract, though, Hancock accuses 'The Memory Man' of being a fraud. In his place, Hancock introduces a mind reading act he has brought along to the show but, as listeners will learn, she never quite gets to perform her act.

Finally, Hancock appears with Arthur Askey and Edna Fryer in a short play about a safari in the African jungle in search of Tondelayo, the African Princess. Hancock plays a rather unusual role in this performance, as will be heard. Edna Fryer was a well-known television actress who appeared on *The Charlie Chester Show* on TV from 1951 – 1956.

The final sketch in this show is missing some dialogue. The original tape had broken at some time and been repaired, leaving two gaps with an isolated line of Hancock's in the middle. It is not possible to do a seamless repair on this – too much of the script is missing – but all the surviving material is given here.

### **Extract from *Calling All Forces***

**Featuring Charlie Chester, Terry-Thomas, Josephine Crombie and Stanley Black and his dance orchestra**

**First broadcast on BBC Light Programme, 5 May 1952**

The second *Calling All Forces* item presented here contains extracts from Hancock's fourth appearance as co-host with Charlie Chester. It is, again, divided into three sections. By now, these sections typically comprised Hancock trying to hoodwink Chester during his opening patter; Hancock then introducing his latest 'girl'; and, lastly, Hancock participating in the final play at the end of the broadcast. This edition of the show followed this now-familiar pattern.

First, having completed the sale of coat hangers to near-sighted Australians as boomerangs, Hancock gallantly offers to spend the profit on Chester. But when Charlie wants some butter that Hancock has acquired, the generous offer starts to look less attractive. Next, Hancock introduces a lady called Haggis, to whom he is apparently engaged. It transpires that he is also engaged to Agatha Dinglebody, a reference to the character played by Hattie Jacques in Hancock's previous significant success, *Educating Archie*. Finally, Hancock is joined by Terry-Thomas and Josephine Crombie (a 1950s TV actress) in a play in which the two main characters want to take Lady Chatterley's hand in marriage.

### **Extract from *Christmas Night with the Stars***

**Featuring Tottie Truman Taylor and Alec Bregonzi**

**First Broadcast on BBC1, 25 December 1958**

Fans of Hancock were in for a treat over Christmas 1958. At 16:30 on Christmas Day, Hancock was on the radio in the *Hancock's Half Hour* special *Bill and Father Christmas* (recorded 7 December 1958) and at 21:05 on Boxing Day, the fourth television series of *Hancock's Half Hour* started with *Ericson the Viking* (recorded on 16 December 1958). In between these two *Hancock's Half Hours*, Hancock appeared in a sketch on *Christmas Night with the Stars* which was broadcast on Christmas Day (although this was recorded on 2 December 1958). Written by Galton and Simpson, *The Budgerigar Sketch* became a Hancock classic. The piece is set in a suburban living room. The owner, an elderly lady, enters, accompanied by the Vicar (played, respectively, by Tottie Truman Taylor and Alec Bregonzi, both of whom appeared in innumerable episodes of *Hancock's Half Hour* on television). The owner uncovers the budgie's cage to reveal Hancock dressed in a bird costume. The owner tries to get the truculent Hancock to perform party tricks, whilst he bemoans his life in captivity:

*'Gets on your nerves. Stuck here all day long: nothing to eat, not a bit of millet since Tuesday – it's not good enough. It's not right. How can I stop me feathers falling out without me nourishment. I'm not the bird I was. If I knew his number I'd have Peter Scott round.'*

This sketch had actually been written in 1957 for a now-lost BBC television broadcast which was part of a series called *A-Z: the ABC of Show Business*. In 1961, Galton and Simpson resurrected the budgie character in Hancock's first starring film, *The Rebel*. In Paris, and being lauded as a great artist, Hancock dresses in the bird costume when he attends a fancy dress party on board the yacht of a rich patron. Hancock has just created a monstrous sculpture of his wife and has to beat a hasty getaway, still clad in his feathers. This leads to the famous scene where he arrives at the airport in full costume and tells the bemused staff that he needs to fly to London.



*Harry Secombe, Hancock's close friend and colleague. This picture from the BBC files is dated 25 May 1955. This was the day after Secombe recorded The Crown Jewels, the second episode of the second series of Hancock's Half Hour, when he was deputising for Hancock (who had withdrawn from the show due to a nervous breakdown).*

Hancock repeated *The Budgerigar Sketch* on 13 November 1967 in the ITV show *Secombe and Friends*. This time, Jimmy Grafton took over the script and gave a twist to the original premise. The old lady now announces she has a surprise for Hancock: a '*new little friend*', played by Secombe. '*Little friend? You must be joking!*' retorts Hancock.

Frankie Howerd and Patricia Hayes also reprised the sketch in the ITV show *Comedy Tonight* in April 1980.

This recording was sourced from the soundtrack in the BBC Film Library.

## ***A Story of Our Time: What Happened to Hancock?***

Written and presented by Philip Oakes

Featuring Ralph Reader, Beryl Vertue, Sylvia Sims, Sid James, Duncan Wood, Michael Wale, Ray Galton and Alan Simpson.

**First Broadcast on BBC Radio 4, 2 February 1971**

Philip Oakes was a writer, poet, critic and journalist whose career spanned sixty years. He was particularly well-placed to helm this documentary, having met Hancock when interviewing him for a literary magazine in the late 1950s. A few years later, Hancock moved to Lingfield in Surrey, a few miles away from where Oakes then lived, and they became close friends.

Following the split from Galton and Simpson in the wake of *The Rebel*, it was Oakes to whom Hancock turned with a view to writing his next major film, *The Punch and Judy Man*. The recollections of his time with Hancock partly form the basis of this documentary, and were considered at greater length in a short book he wrote a few years later (*The Entertainers: Tony Hancock*). Ardent fans of Hancock are recommended to read this for its fascinating and intimate observations; as an added attraction, it contains numerous photographs from Hancock's life and career not readily found in other sources.

The conclusion of this book – with its echoes of *The Last Bus Home* – offers a fascinating reminder of how enmeshed Hancock's fictional and personal characters became:

*'And I think of him standing one night in the pouring rain, lightning sizzling overhead, and some malevolent, unbeliever-in God threatening doom with peal after peal of thunder. Hancock, the indomitable, mopped his face and looked heaven squarely in the eye. 'Go on' he dared the Almighty. 'Make it worse.'*

Ralph Reader, who provides some recollections of Hancock, played an instrumental role in his career. Reader was heavily involved in the Scout movement and first found fame in 1932 when he staged an all-scout variety show – *The Gang's All Here* – at La Scala in London. Soon after, his productions became known as 'Gang Shows', and during the Second World War, he was tasked with running concert parties for the troops (whilst, it must be said, gathering intelligence on morale for RAF Intelligence). In total, Reader managed 24 Gang Shows which performed across the breadth of the theatre of war. In the process, he recruited around 400 entertainers, including Hancock, who had been drafted into the air force by this time. Reader auditioned him, when he was just 19, at the Gang Show base in Houghton Street, London, in 1944.

*'I asked him if he had any comedy material. He rolled off about a dozen or so. Apart from one, I hadn't heard any of them before. They were not real jokes, but mostly service situations. This was fine because we wanted all-rounders who could play in sketches.'*

As a result of this, Hancock was posted to Gang Show 9 and toured Europe until his demobilisation in 1946. Thereafter, he suffered from what can only be described as penury until Reader came to his rescue. In February 1946, Reader began organising a production that would eventually be known as *Wings*. This was a variety show specially designed for ex-RAF entertainment personnel who were finding it difficult to adjust to civilian life. Hancock was successful in his audition, although he ascribed this to his wartime association with Reader. *Wings* toured for much of 1947, concluding in September, whereupon Hancock had to endure another long period of poverty and occasional bookings until his career significantly picked up in January 1949 with a spot on *Variety Bandbox*.



*Ralph Reader, pictured here in 1963 during his appearance on This is Your Life with Eamonn Andrews.*

This recording was sourced from the BBC Sound Archive.

### ***Heroes for a Time***

**Introduced by Tony Bilbow**

**Featuring Ray Galton, Alan Simpson, Kenneth Williams, Lyn Took, Barry Took, Billy Marsh, Arthur Askey**

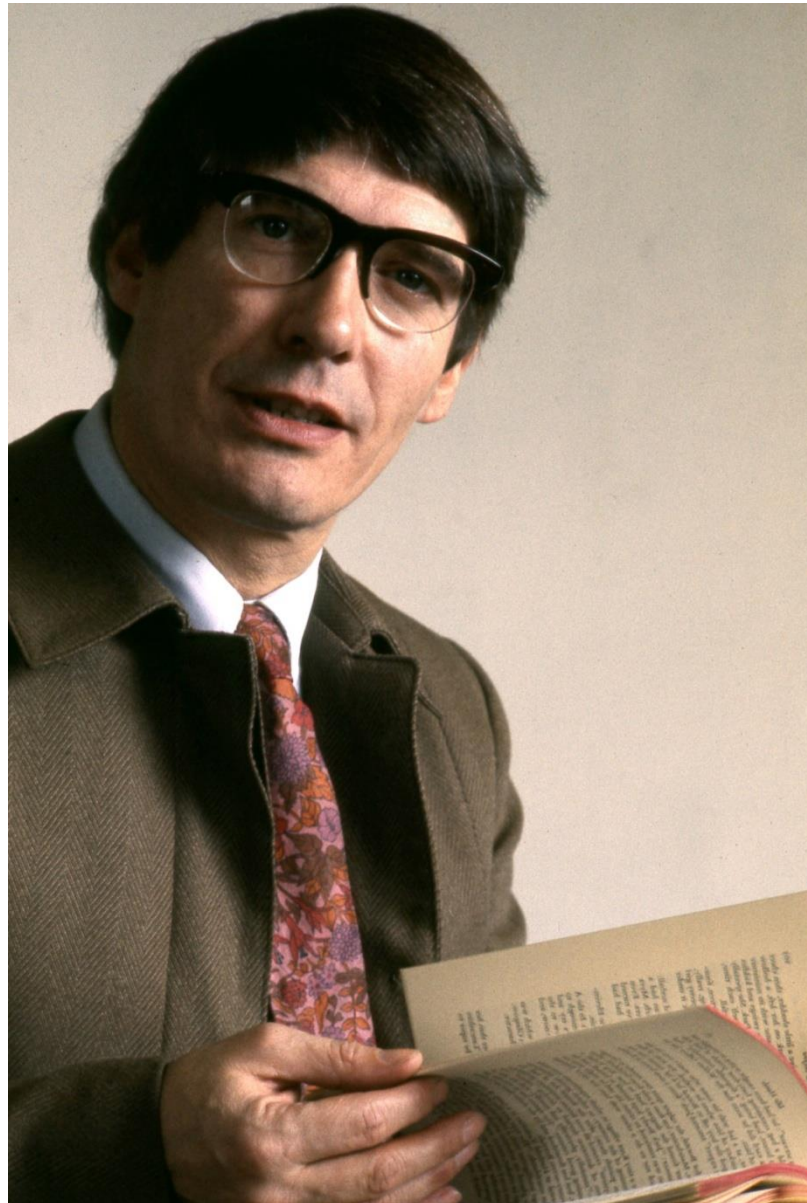
**First Broadcast on BBC Radio 4, 6 June 1978**

Two series of *Heroes for a Time* were broadcast over 1977 and 1978. The series focused upon a number of stars who had made a significant impact on British culture, such as The Goons, The Beatles, Tommy Handley and Ruby Murray. The episode on Hancock was broadcast nearly 10 years after his death. It features clips from various radio shows such as *The Insurance Policy*, *The Poetry Society* and his *Face to Face* interview with John Freeman. It is particularly interesting because it features rare interviews with Lyn Took (his quasi-secretary for a time); scriptwriter Barry Took; entertainment great Arthur Askey; and Billy Marsh (one of Hancock's agents). Each offers frank, if not harsh, insights into Hancock's psyche and behaviour.

In the course of researching this volume, the THAS was delighted to solve the mystery of what turned out to be a related clip within its archive that had existed for many years but lacked any additional transmission data. The footage, which lasts for just 30 seconds, features Hancock being interviewed briefly about the nature of being a comedian. Following a random discussion with Kaleidoscope, the lost broadcast organisation, it kindly sent us a link to a publically available

recording of a current affairs clip show called *Day by Yesterday*. This was broadcast on 31 December 1981, and was made to signify the last day of Southern Television, in particular the final broadcast of the channel's current affairs show *Day by Day*. It featured the same interview, which can be seen here at around 14 minutes.

[https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1tboj2\\_day-by-yesterday-the-final-edition-of-day-by-day\\_shortfilms](https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1tboj2_day-by-yesterday-the-final-edition-of-day-by-day_shortfilms)



*The journalist and broadcaster Tony Bilbow interviewed Hancock on several occasions. Pictured here in 1969*

The footage was published by the University of Wessex, which now holds the Southern Television archive, and from the accompanying programme notes we realised that the interviewer was none other than Tony Bilbow. Now in his eighties, the venerable journalist and broadcaster was delighted when we contacted him about the interview, which he recalled taking place during the making of *The Punch and Judy Man* (we estimate this was in 1963). We learnt from him that this was part of a much longer interview; sadly, on further discussions with the University of Wessex, it seems it no longer exists. Tony Bilbow recalled that he had also interviewed Hancock in a milk bar a few years before this when he was working for the BBC. We believe this was for *In Town Today* which was broadcast on 4 March 1961; to date, this is also presumed lost.

*Heroes for a Time* was problematical to source. It does not exist in BBC Sound Archives, and was never transmitted on VHF, so all off-air recordings are compromised from the start. Fortunately, Ted Kendall acquired the collection of the late Peter Copeland, the renowned sound archivist, in the late 2000s. This contained a recording of the programme made from an internal BBC source, probably the "ring main" which distributed all the main BBC services to production offices and engineering workshops.

From today's perspective, some of the views expressed in this programme may seem unduly harsh. It was this climate of opinion which prompted Roger Hancock to suggest to Roger Wilmut, author of *The Goon Show Companion*, that he write the book which became *Tony Hancock - Artiste*, in order that a fair and comprehensive view of Hancock's life and work should be available.

***Woman's Hour* - extract**  
**Introduced by Maureen Staffer**  
**Featuring Freddie Ross Hancock**

### **First Broadcast on BBC Radio 4, 8 June 1979**

Freddie Ross Hancock was Hancock's second wife. She first met the entertainer in 1953; they were eventually married in 1965, but their divorce was already in process when Hancock died in 1968. Freddie was a very successful television agent and marketing consultant who subsequently moved to the United States where her career burgeoned yet further in the film and stage industry.

It is worth noting that her recollections of how Hancock met Galton and Simpson require some clarification, if not correction. Galton and Simpson's potential was first recognized by the BBC producer Gale Pedrick, who was impressed by a hand-written sketch they submitted in mid-1951. Pedrick connected them with a major star of the time, Derek Roy, who was seeking new gags and 'singles' (akin to a monologue) for his many radio and stage appearances and, specifically, a new radio show, *Happy-Go-Lucky*. This gave Galton and Simpson their first professional break. A more detailed exposition of these events is provided in the first volume of this series.

Hancock appeared in a completely self-contained sketch in the show called *Eager Beavers* and rarely had much contact with the rest of the cast and crew. When the programme began to struggle in September 1951, the producer was fired and replaced with Main Wilson who, in turn, fired the regular writers and replaced them with Galton and Simpson. This was some time in October 1951. On 11 November 1951, as Galton and Simpson sat in the stalls watching their first *Happy-Go-Lucky* scripts being rehearsed at the Paris Cinema, Hancock walked past them. 'Did you write that?' he said. 'Very funny.' This was their first encounter. To be clear, Dennis Main Wilson did not directly introduce them and, most certainly, was not the first BBC producer to recognise their talent.

Possibly the most noteworthy aspect of this interview is Freddie's pointed reminder of the gargantuan task Hancock faced when breaking ground in the field of situation comedy on television. As she stresses, he had to learn '58 pages of foolscap script, every week, on television, live, before six cameras'. Interestingly, Maureen Stafford then asks about the use of teleprompters, and Freddie states that they were 'not available'. As it happens, teleprompters were being used by US networks for comedies and dramas some years before the advent of *Hancock's Half Hour* on television in 1956. Lucille Ball used them in 1953 on *I Love Lucy*, initially for reading adverts but eventually for the broadcast's entire script. The show's creator, chief writer and producer, Jess Oppenheimer, was awarded a patent for the development of the 'in the lens' teleprompter, which uses a mirror to reflect a script onto a piece of glass placed in front of the camera lens, thus allowing the reader to look directly into the camera. Indeed, Autocue, one of the first British companies to offer this service, began operating in 1955. However, the BBC used its facilities for news programmes as opposed to dramas and comedies. This was partly because of the complexity and cost of using the system in scenes with multiple cameras. Again, modern audiences – even those who are devoted fans of Hancock – perhaps have little appreciation of the tremendous pressure that Hancock was under after he moved to television in 1956. Over the next four series of the small screen version of the show, he carried 37 programmes, with all but four

performed live. This was over a period of just three years; during this period, the radio version of *Hancock's Half Hour* was often running concurrently, and he was also regularly appearing live on stage. These notes are not the place to analyse in detail the reasons for Hancock's future professional and private woes, but it can be strongly suggested that some of their antecedents can be traced to the incredible pressures this workload placed upon him.

The origins of this recording are unknown: we believe it comes from an off-air source, most likely on cassette tape. Ted Kendall has restored it as far as possible.

***Six Characters in Search of an Answer***  
**Introduced by Barry Cryer**

**First Broadcast on Radio 4, 26 October 2003**

*Six Characters in Search of an Author* is an Italian play by Luigi Pirandello which was written and first performed in 1921. It is a play about the relationship among authors, their characters, and the actors. It is, therefore, a wholly appropriate title for this warm documentary which tells the story of the development of both *Hancock's Half Hour* and the Hancock character. It explores the relationship between the key participants in the story, including scriptwriters Galton and Simpson, and considers the juxtaposition of the real Hancock alongside the character created by his writers.

Narrated by Barry Cryer, the programme features extensive interviews with Galton and Simpson, Dennis Main Wilson and Richard Briers.



Barry Cryer, far right, pictured with (from left to right), Peter Reeves, Bob Todd, Nicholas Parsons and Denise Bryer. Cast photograph from Radio 4's 'Listen to this Space', 1967

Cryer, whose writing and performing career started in the 1950s, met Hancock numerous times. In an interview in 2001 about the capricious nature of show business, he said:

*'Tony Hancock said to me years ago: 'I swear audiences meet before a show to decide what sort of audience they're going to be'.*

There are extracts from radio shows *Star Bill* (21 March 1954), *The Bequest* (3/3 2 November 1955), *The Diary* (4/12 30 December 1956), *The Emigrant* (4/19 17 February 1957), *A Sunday Afternoon at Home* (5/14 22 April 1958) and from television shows *The Ladies' Man* (6/7 15 April 1960) and *The Blood Donor* (7/5 23 June 1961) plus the *Face to Face* interview (7 February 1960).

This recording was sourced from the BBC Sound Archive.

## ***The Essay* – Tony Hancock**

### **First Broadcast BBC Radio 3, 16 April 2015**

*The Essay* is a long running BBC Radio 3 series with over 500 episodes to date. The episodes are typically broadcast as a themed series of programmes across a week in which leading writers, journalists or commentators from the worlds of art, politics, history, science and philosophy offer their opinion, insight and assessment of the theme under discussion.

In the week commencing 13 April 2015, Simon Heffer, the columnist and historian, broadcast his essays on much-loved comic actors of mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century British film.

The first three episodes featured Will Hay, Alastair Sim and Terry-Thomas; the fourth essay focused on Hancock.

Given the theme of the thread (film), it limits its analysis to Hancock's two starring roles in *The Rebel* (1961) and *The Punch and Judy Man* (1963), referencing Hancock's other film performances in passing. For reference, it is worth noting that these were a supporting role in *Orders Are Orders* (alongside Sid James and Peter Sellers in 1954), and cameos in *Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines* (1965) and *The Wrong Box* (1966).

Heffer considers the strengths and weaknesses of *The Rebel* and *The Punch and Judy Man* in the context of the changes that Hancock was making in his professional life (such as the dismissal of Sid James from the cast of *Hancock's Half Hour* and the firing of Galton and Simpson). Concluding on a positive note – the continued influence of Hancock to this day – Heffer's essay reflects on both the tragedy and comedy of his work and career.

This recording was sourced from the BBC Sound Archive.

## ***The Essay* – Sid James**

### **First Broadcast BBC Radio 3, 16 April 2015**

The final programme in Heffer's series focused on Sid James. Compared to Hancock's paltry film legacy in the previous edition, this time Heffer had significantly more choice. Sid had appeared in over a hundred movies.



Sid James. Official BBC publicity picture for the first radio series of *Hancock's Half Hour*, 1954

Heffer focuses on his portrayal of a slightly shady but lovable cockney in a wide range of films but ultimately focuses on the *Carry On* series; Sid appeared in 20 of the 31 films from 1960 – 1974 and also appeared in the compilation film *That's Carry On!* in 1977. Heffer's essay also hones in on *Carry on Up The Khyber* (1968), considered by many to be the best of the series.

This recording was sourced from the BBC Sound Archive.

### **Acknowledgements**

The THAS would like to offer its sincere thanks to those who, over our long history, worked to find and save material featuring Hancock. This collection would not have been possible without the dedicated work of countless members of our society and its friends.

Sadly, many of these names and their contributions have not been properly recorded, as is the nature of an amateur organisation such as ours. Many have passed away. We owe a great debt to all of them.

Ted Kendall, one of the leading sound engineers in the world, has restored and remastered the material in this collection. However, Ted's contribution to the preservation of *Hancock's Half Hour* comprises much more than this. Over the decades he has discovered missing Hancock material from myriad sources that, otherwise, would have been lost forever.

He has also been the saviour of significant private collections of sound radio that risked dispersal or destruction on their owner's passing. His contribution to unearthing and preserving priceless broadcast material from many genres – not just related to Hancock – constitutes a significant contribution to the history of broadcast media that has been sorely unappreciated. Further information can be found at [www.tedkendall.com](http://www.tedkendall.com).

We would also like to acknowledge the invaluable contributions to this volume of D Jeremy Stevenson, Malcolm Chapman, Tony Bilbow, Vic Rogers, Chris Perry, Simon Winters, Steff Palmer, Paul Balsillie, Dr Matthew Partington and Keith Wickham.

**Tristan Brittain-Dissont and Martin Gibbons**

**Tony Hancock Appreciation Society**

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