



One of the striking images from *Me and My Hair: A Social History*, by Patricia Malcolmson - read an extract from the book on pages 6-9

BBC feature helps *Dear Miss Landau* soar into the best-sellers

One of the books chosen for discussion on BBC Radio Four's programme *A Good Read* this summer was *Dear Miss Landau*, the true story of a Rain Man's journey to meet a Hollywood star.

Perhaps it was the declaration by Tim Coates, former managing director of Waterstones, that *Dear Miss Landau* was the best book he'd read for 10 years that sent listeners dashing off to their nearest bookshop to order it as soon as the programme finished? The net result

was that it soared to number 14 in the Amazon UK best-seller list, just ahead of Hilary Mantel's *Bring Up the Bodies*. You can read a transcript of the BBC programme on pages 12-13 of this issue of *Inside Story*. *Dear Miss Landau* author James Christie has done a series of readings/book signings over the summer, as has Stephen Wade, author of *Passion for the Park*, a witty and irreverent memoir about the joys of amateur football - there is an extract from the book in this issue of *Inside Story*. Also in this issue is a preview of *Me and My Hair: A Social History*, by

Patricia Malcolmson. Patricia is best-known for her series of books based on the wartime diaries written by Nella Last for *Mass Observation*: this is her first title for Chaplin Books and it's a fascinating look at British women's attitude to their hair over the last 150 years.

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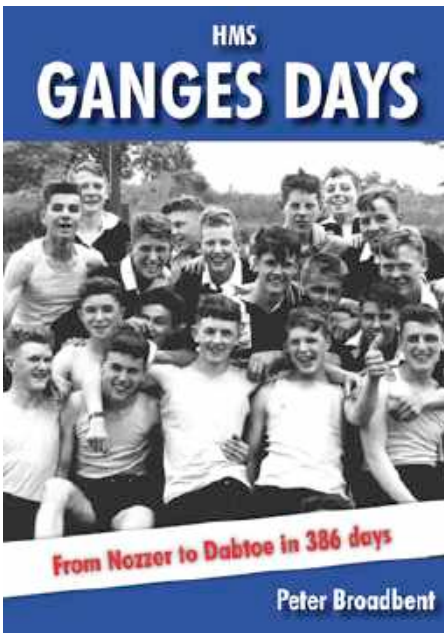
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Our top five sellers

* * * * *

Dear Miss Landau by James Christie
HMS Ganges Days by Peter Broadbent
The Wonder of Woolies ed. by Derek Phillips
England's Secret Weapon by Amanda J Field
Interviews with Eric Rohmer ed. by Bert Cardullo

Shoulders back, chest out, head up!



When Peter Broadbent entered *HMS Ganges*, the toughest training establishment for young recruits to the Royal Navy, he was a naive 15-year-old Yorkshire schoolboy, entranced with the idea of seeing the world, proud of his drainpipe trousers and DA hairstyle, and eager to meet girls. In other words, he was a 'Nozzer' - a raw and unsuspecting recruit. When he emerged 386 days later it was as a prospective 'Dabtoe', not quite a fully trained Seaman, but well on the way. This funny and vivid memoir accurately captures what it was like to climb the mast, have your kit trashed, learn to swear, develop a taste for Kye and Stickies, double around the parade-ground at dead of night in your pyjamas, endlessly run up and down Laundry Hill ... and to do it all and much more while being continually barracked by a demanding Petty Officer Instructor. Along the way, Peter relished learning the Navy lingo and how to sail. He consumed platefuls of Cheese Ush, won a boxing certificate, discovered a secret stash of Playboy magazines, smoked thousands of cigarettes, and convinced girls back home that his shorn hair was in fact the very latest fashion 'down south'.

An extract from *HMS Ganges Days* by Peter Broadbent

Friday 8 January. We were woken at 06:00 by something played on a bugle. Petty Officer Payne explained to us that the tune was officially called Reveille, but referred to throughout the Navy as 'Charlie'. I identified the strange looking funnel-shaped object up amongst the roof rafters as a loudspeaker ... because that's where Charlie came from. On future mornings, the static click of the Tannoy was enough to wake us from our deep Suffolk slumber.

Whacker had a wake-up routine that was becoming boringly repetitive. 'Rise And Shine!' he would shout as he swung open the main mess door and marched up and down the mess shouting, bawling and clattering the bed ends until we were all out of bed.

With a click of his heels, he stopped at the end of a bed quickly vacated by a tall rangy individual who had uncommonly pale skin. 'What's Your Name, Lad?'

'Reynolds ... sir.' he said as he removed his towel from the bar on his locker door.

'What Does Your Mummy Call You Junior Seaman Second Class Reynolds?'

'Son ... sir.'

'Don't Be Funny With Me, Lad. What Is Your First Name?'

'Gene ... sir.'

'That's A Girl's Name.'

'Gene with a 'G'.'

'Gene With A 'G' WHAT!'

'Gene with a 'G' sir.'

'Like Gene The Singing Cowboy?'

'Yes ... sir.'

'What Happened To Your Chin, Reynolds?'

Gene stroked his chin. For the first time I noticed that it was rather an odd shape.

'I don't know what you mean sir.'

'What Has Happened To Your Chin? When And Where Did You Lose Your Chin, Reynolds?'

'I didn't know that I had lost it sir,' he pointed to his chin. 'It's right here ... sir.'

'Look Around You, Lad.' He swung his stick. 'Everybody Else In The Mess Has A Protuberance Between Mouth And Neck. But You ... Junior Seaman Second Class Reynolds ... Appear Not To Have One.'

'Sorry sir.'

'You're What We Call In This Man's Navy ... A Chinless Wonder.'

'Yes sir.' Gene rubbed his now shivering white chest with his towel.

'So You Won't Be Surprised If You Are Hereinafter Known As Chinless ... Chinless Reynolds, Will You?'

'Not really sir ... no sir.'

Whacker waved an arm towards the bathroom and Chinless scuttled away.

We had our first session of drill later the same day. It was known in the Navy as Parade Instruction and was undertaken regardless of the weather. Today there was a biting cold wind coming at us from over the Dining Hall and it was raining. Whacker demonstrated the various commands and JI Hawthorne showed us what our expected response should be. Standing to

attention ('Haar-Ten-Shun!') required us to stand with the heels of our boots together and our toes splayed at between ten and 15 degrees. Our shoulders were to be pulled well back, chest out, head up and arms straight down by our sides with our fingers clenched at the first knuckle and thumbs in line with the seam of our action working dress trousers.

Whacker walked up and down the ranks checking on our feet and general bearing. He stopped and faced someone at the end of the front rank and eyed him up and down. He snorted, swung to the side and snorted again. He tapped the back of the lad's knees with his stick and leaned over so that he spoke directly into his ear.

'Where's Your Horse, Lad?'

'Pardon sir?'

'Where's Your Horse, Lad. The Inside Of Your Knees Are Supposed To Be Together ... Together!'

'Sorry sir.'

'Pull Them In Then, Lad ... Pull Them In!'

'Can't sir. That's as far as they will go sir ... sorry sir.'

'You Could Drive A Bus Through There, Lad.'

'Yes sir ... sorry sir.'

'A Double Decker Bus!'

'Yes sir ... sorry sir.'

'You Are What Is Known In This Man's Navy As Bandy Legged Lad.'

'Sorry sir.'

'You Are, My Son ... What We Call In The Navy ... Severely Bandy Legged!'

'Yes sir. Thank you sir.'

'Hardy Mess ... Hardy Mess ... Stan Atta Heysel!' This was another complicated manoeuvre. One foot ... our right foot ... was moved about one and a half feet away from its partner maintaining the same heel/toe splay-angle. At the same time our hands were to be



moved smartly to a location behind our back, the right hand clamped firmly on top of our left ... or was it the left hand firmly on top of our right? Shoulders remained pulled back, chest out and head up. For some unknown reason this was the command that took us the longest to master.

The most eagerly anticipated command was 'Stan daaah Eysay!' This command would normally follow 'Stan Atta Heysel!' and was the opportunity for us to relax whilst keeping our shoulders back, chest out and head up.

Whacker was quietly strolling up and down the mess when 'Lugs', a skinny, pale-skinned lad over six foot tall with a protruding Adam's Apple and sticky-out ears, spoke to him.

'Can I ask you a question please sir?'

'Of Course You Can, Lad. That's What I Am Here For. Ask Away!'

'When do we get our rum sir?'

'WHAT?' Whacker spluttered and turned crimson. 'How Did You Learn About Rum, Lad?'

'In the papers sir.'

'In The Papers?'

'Yes sir.'

'Well My Tall Little Sparrow, How Old Are You?'

'Fifteen sir.'

'And Your Sixteenth Birthday Is When?'

'March sir, the second of March.' Lugs proudly tried to expand his concave chest.

'Well Young Man,' Whacker puffed up his chest to its maximum, his gilded buttons straining on the front of his jacket. 'Your Rum Will Therefore Be Available To You In Approximately Four Years And Two Months Time!' ■



An interview with Peter Broadbent

What made you decide to write about your *HMS Ganges* experiences in a book, after all these years?

My maternal grandfather had an interesting young life, serving in India and fighting in the trenches during WWI, but he died when I was only 15 years old and I know nothing about his early life. As a diarist, I want to leave something tangible for my grandchildren.

What kind of reaction to the book have you had from other *Ganges* colleagues?

Great - the book has 're-kindled' long forgotten memories for many. I now have a significant fan base of ex-*Ganges* 'groupies'.

You describe a very tough regime at *Ganges*: what do you think in your character helped you 'sail' through it?

I've always been the type of person who looked for the 'easy' way and I accepted, sometimes reluctantly, whatever *Ganges* threw at me. It took real

courage to 'buck' the *Ganges* system and I wasn't that brave. I make friends easily and can adapt quickly to changing situations ... and that helped.

And why do you think so many men talk so warmly about what were, quite frankly, horribly punishing routines?

I suppose there is a certain degree of pride in being able to emerge from such a lengthy and testing experience relatively unscathed. Without exception, ex-*Ganges* boys are proud to be ex-*Ganges* boys and I wonder if there isn't something bordering on the masochistic there.

Do you think youngsters today would benefit from training like this (or survive such training)?

I wish I could say yes, but in these more liberal days I don't think it would be possible. I despair at today's lack of good discipline and society's apparent inability to administer decent authority.

You went on to have a long career in the Navy: what aspects did you particularly enjoy?

Travel and comradeship. After I left the service, I was fortunate to find a position that enabled me to travel worldwide, though I never experienced the same level of comradeship after leaving the Navy.

You moved to Spain some years ago and started a magazine for ex-pats. How did that come about?

My wife and I were some of the first foreigners to settle in our small village in 2001. After a couple of years we were followed by a host of other ex-pats, many of whom needed to work to earn money. Sitting outside the village bar one day I noticed the number of hand-written advertisements taped to the inside of the windows. I turned to my wife and said, 'The village needs a newsletter.' Within six years, it had developed into a full-colour magazine with a monthly print run of over 45,000, distributed throughout the Costa Blanca.

What's the best thing about living in Spain?

The vast majority of Spanish people, the lack of traffic, the weather, the Mediterranean, the cost of living, good coffee, fiestas & siestas, Barcelona FC, the mountains, Cava and clean mountain air.

Are you working on another book at the moment?

Yes. After leaving *Ganges* I spent some time onboard *HMS Bermuda*, a WWII battle cruiser that was home to many of the Home Fleet's malcontents. At the age of 17½ I was placed in the Main Seamen's Mess where my extraordinary lower-deck education began in earnest ... that's an interesting and amusing story.

Do you have a writing 'routine'?

I get up very early most days and work undisturbed for at least two hours. I live with a small paper notebook to hand and during the 'plotting' period I am constantly making notes. I do re-writes constantly. I find that working on more than one book at the same time suits me. Flipping between different projects keeps my creative juices flowing. ■

If you enjoyed this extract and interview then you'll want to read the book: *HMS Ganges Days* is an illustrated ebook priced at £5.99 and is available direct from Chaplin Books and from all good internet ebook retailers including Amazon.



'There is a certain degree of pride in being able to emerge from such a lengthy and testing experience relatively unscathed'

Me and My Hair

a social history



by

**PATRICIA
MALCOLMSON**

Good hair day? Bad hair day? Hair has always evoked strong emotions.

In *Me and My Hair*, Patricia Malcolmsen examines how British women over the past 150 years have managed their hair, from the extravagant styles of the late nineteenth century to the 'anything goes' attitude of today, taking in along the way the daring bobs of the 1920s, the wartime styles of women in uniform, the slavish copying of Hollywood stars, the beehive, the hippy and the Goth. In *Me and My Hair* you'll hear the voices of women from around Britain talking about their hair – whether it's their longing to have 'Shirley Temple' curls, the visits of the nit nurse, their first home perm, roasting under hood dryers, going platinum blonde, hilarious experiments with hair extensions, or fears of going grey.

PATRICIA MALCOLMSON has a special interest in the social history of everyday life. She is the author of a book on English laundresses and co-editor of numerous twentieth-century diaries, most recently *The Diaries of Nella Last: Writing in War and Peace*.



When women bobbed their hair

An extract from *Me and My Hair: A Social History*

by Patricia Malcolmsen

Where did the bob come from? In the early twentieth century short haircuts for children of both sexes, with thick straight fringes and one length cut straight round at about ear level, often called the Buster Brown or Dutch Cut, were appearing in Britain and America. Later the bob for adult women was a practical response to the conditions of wartime factory work and is sometimes thought to derive from the easy-to-care-for styles adopted by wartime nurses. It was also an imitative response to Parisian high fashion; a flouting of the conventions of a society that had created the horrors of the Western front; an endorsement of the styles of the Jazz Age; and a testimony to the influence of the silver screen. The notoriety attached to the bob led many to claim authorship. The name 'bob' itself

likely goes back to the eighteenth century when wigs were widely worn and merchants and other men of relatively modest means often wore a shorter and relatively cheaper bobbed wig with the ends curled under. (The epithet 'bigwig' derives from the wealthy man who could afford the more elaborate full-bottomed wig.) 'Bobbing' was also the word used to describe a short dressing of a horse's tail.

Whatever the historic derivation, twentieth-century contemporaries were eager to associate themselves with the hot new trend. One widely circulated story told of Coco Chanel in 1917 cutting off her braids with nail scissors after a gas-heater exploded near her head: she appeared at the opera shortly thereafter with short hair and skirt – and thus inspired a new trend.

A neat, short haircut was eminently compatible with the sleek clothing she designed, so perhaps this story, even if true, was as much a fashion statement or an example of Chanel's talent for self-advertisement as an amusing anecdote. In the ever fickle world of fashion, the bob proved as enduring as the iconic Chanel jacket. The famous society coiffeur, Antoine, also took credit for the bob, having invented the 'coupe à la Jeanne d'Arc' when in 1909 (sometimes cited as 1911) he cut the hair of Eve Lavallière to prepare the 45-year-old actress for the role of Joan of Arc. The middle-aged Lavallière, though a highly skilled actress, still had to look plausibly like the teenaged saint. Her hairdresser's inspiration came from the concierge's daughter whose 'hair was cut short all round her head with bangs that fell nearly into her eyes'. Her head was small, tidy, and, most important, youthful. 'Before the morning was over', Antoine recounted in his memoir, 'I had cut her hair into a bob, the first bobbed haircut of this new day, years before any other woman wore a bob'. This haircut was innovative, striking and designed to meet a specific need. A decade later it was widely imitated, far from the theatre and in all walks of society. Antoine, a shameless self-promoter, gave himself full credit for the wide acceptance of the new cropped style. He described his sartorial epiphany thus: 'a bell rang inside my head. The time had come for women to have their hair cut short. This new automobile in which women sat open to the winds, these new women with careers, this busy life. And these clinging clothes, which demanded small, neat heads, not enormous masses of hair.' Did Antoine

deserve the credit? Who knows? But this was far from the first or last time that the hairstyles of celebrities were to be imitated in the High Street.

Josephine Baker, the sensual American exotic performer, was almost as well known for her greased-down bob as she was for her 1925 Paris debut performance wearing little other than a strategically placed bunch of

of rooms'. (By that time he had added celebrities from Coco Chanel and Claudette Colbert to Simone Signoret and even the 'sex kitten' Brigitte Bardot to his client list.) The dancers Irene Castle in New York and Isadora Duncan in Paris adopted short hairstyles to go with their shortened skirts. In artistic and theatrical circles cropped hair was labelled the 'Castle Bob' after



bananas. Antoine again was reputedly responsible for her sleek brilliantined head. And according to one envious hairdresser interviewed in the 1970s, so big was the bob phenomenon that Antoine sold his business for '\$17,000,000, and he just lies around the Waldorf in a big suite

Irene, and when the dancer wore a seed pearl necklace around her forehead, another iconic 1920s style was born and nicknamed either the 'Castle Band' or the headache band. Of Iris Storm and her shingled hair, the novelist Michael Arlen wrote in *The Green Hat* (1924): 'Her hair was thick

and tawny... It was like a boy's hair, swept back from her forehead... Above her neck her hair died a very manly death, a more manly death than "bobbed" hair was ever to die.'

The bob was widely taken as a sign of the independence that women had won through their vital work on the home front during the Great War, and as testimony to the cynicism about the bankrupt values that had taken so many young men to the killing fields of Europe. Bobbed hair was also associated in Britain with gaining the vote (though voting restrictions continued until 1928 and prominent suffragettes were better known for their hunger strikes than their haircuts) and the growing economic clout of young women. At its most basic the bob was a blunt cut, level with the bottom of the ears, and worn either with a fringe or with the hair brushed off the face. It was straightforward and readily cared for, and could liberate affluent women from the costly, time-consuming ministrations of hairdressers and ladies' maids. 'Bobbing was exhilarating and rejuvenating; it made the face more alive and alert, well in keeping with the modern spirit in woman', declared a male artist in 1925. He thought the bob 'a masterful stroke, complete and final, in the march of woman's emancipation'. Amelia Earhart, the pioneering aviator, wore her blonde hair in a short, fuss-free bob. The bob fitted in smoothly with the active, healthy-body culture of avant garde modernism. The modernist youth of the 1920s were self-consciously different from previous generations. They flaunted an athletic style with slimmer, fitter and tanned bodies. Sleek, short haircuts and, at times,

body-revealing clothing became the outward signs of modernity.

The bob also reflected the growing impact of films and the new film magazines that spread news of fashion across the globe. When famous film stars such as Mary Pickford, after much personal angst, bobbed their hair, legions of young women took note. During one frenzied week in 1924, it was reported that no less than 3,500 women had their hair bobbed in one New York salon, where stylists kept smelling salts close to hand to revive clients who grew faint as they saw their tresses fall. After the war an expanded consumer society created new jobs for office

Bobbed hair was associated in Britain with women gaining the vote

workers and shop girls; more flexible views about employment for single women drew many thousands into the workforce; and, most significantly, a dramatic decline in the number of possible husbands kept them there. Legions of single women, most with slender means, dreary lives, and scant prospects for a brighter future were drawn to the distractions of the new cinemas which sprang up across Britain in the 1920s and 1930s. Beyond simple amusement, motion pictures spread new styles, of which the bob was one of the most accessible, to a mass audience on both sides of the Atlantic, and well down the English social scale. Joyce Storey, writing of her working-class childhood near Bristol in the later 1920s and early 1930s, recalled that

'everyone who could afford it went to the pictures every week ... As schoolgirls, we copied hairstyles and tried to emulate them. The false became the real.' Meanwhile women in the labour force found the bob to be very practical as well as fashionable: many lived in cold-water flats or rooming houses and lacked the time and facilities for elaborate hairdressing, and the bob, especially when nicely waved, could project a sleek image of professionalism and efficiency.

In a society in which the elite presented themselves as fashion leaders there might be a price to be paid by a plebeian girl who enthusiastically endorsed the modern look. One young girl with stylishly bobbed locks who applied for work as a domestic servant in Lord Litchfield's home in Shugborough was curtly informed that she must grow it again. One member of the family had just had her hair similarly cut and as a servant she should have known better (as she later reflected) than to imitate her superiors. Another young woman, Kathleen Hale, author of the Orlando children's books, recalled that she narrowly missed being expelled from Reading University when she cut her hair short. Her offence seems to have been less that she emulated her betters than that her action was unladylike since she planned to sell her hair to defray some of her student expenses. The famous Christmastime short story by O Henry, 'The Gift of the Magi', recounts the sale by a newly wed woman of her glorious hair so she could buy a watch-fob for her husband. As readers of this story will recall, her husband had sold his watch to buy combs for the long hair he had so admired. ■

The enduring appeal of Sherlock Holmes



An interview with Dr Amanda J Field, author of *England's Secret Weapon: The Wartime Films of Sherlock Holmes*

■ *Have you always been interested in Sherlock Holmes?*

When I was a child, in the 1960s, BBC TV broadcast a Sherlock Holmes series, with Peter Cushing as Holmes and Nigel Stock as Dr Watson. I watched these avidly and later read all the Conan Doyle stories. I've always rather preferred Watson to Holmes - though brilliant, Holmes seemed cold and unfathomable, whereas Watson was much more human somehow, particularly in the way that he was portrayed by Nigel Stock. I was deeply envious of the two men in their cosy sitting room at 221B Baker Street, a roaring fire in the grate, afternoon tea being served by Mrs Hudson, and the prospect of a new mystery to solve.

■ *How easy was it to find primary sources for your research?*

I had an enormous stroke of luck. Just after I had begun my research, a huge collection of Arthur Conan Doyle material was bequeathed by collector Richard Lancelyn Green to Portsmouth



Museum, just a few miles from my home. I volunteered to help sort the collection, and was there from the moment the boxes arrived from Lancelyn Green's home right through to seeing over 20,000 items catalogued on a database. It is an astonishingly rich collection, and gave me, for example, access to previously unseen correspondence between the Doyle estate and the Hollywood studios who were making these wartime Holmes films: this was invaluable for the book. I also went to Los Angeles to look at studio production files, most of which are held by the University of Southern California.

■ *The wartime films brought Holmes into the modern era. How successful was this?*

It was so successful that no-one today seems to remember that



Holmes had been 'modernised' at all in these films. I was amused to read the headlines about Sherlock, the new BBC adaptation (starring Benedict Cumberbatch as Holmes) which treated it as if this was the very first time that Holmes had been brought out of the Victorian era. In fact, until 1939, Holmes had always been set in contemporary times and it wasn't really until 1959 that the 'cult' of the Victorian prevailed.

■ *Who do you think is the greatest film or TV Holmes?*

I think that your favourite Holmes is nearly always the one you grew up with: many people today name Jeremy Brett as the best Holmes, and although he was excellent in the role, I believe the choice has got more to do with the viewer and what's happening in their life at the time than it has to do with the actor himself. So, while I grew to love Basil Rathbone's interpretation when I was researching his films, no-one will ever replace Peter Cushing as my favourite.

■ *Would you describe yourself as a Holmes enthusiast?*

Not really, because my knowledge of Holmes is absolutely minimal compared, for example, to

most members of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. They know every detail of every Doyle story and they can give you a learned argument (complete with dozens of references to the stories) as to whether Holmes went to Oxford or Cambridge, or why Watson's war-wound seemed to move between his leg and his shoulder.

■ *What makes a good film historian?*

I think the key is to write about films in their historical context: not to see them as standing apart from time or society, and to recognise that they do not have a single 'meaning' but multiple meanings, depending on when they are viewed and who is viewing them. It's also important to see them as products of an industry rather than works of art created by a single person or auteur.

■ *What's your next project?*

My next book is called *Sucker Punch* and it's a study of boxing films in the 1930, 40s and 50s. Boxing films are a neglected area of Film Studies and hopefully the book will appeal to fight fans as well as to the intelligent film viewer. ■



'The best book I've read for ten years'

Tim Coates, former MD of Waterstones, gives his verdict on
Dear Miss Landau

On July 17, *Dear Miss Landau* by James Christie was one of three books discussed on *A Good Read*, the popular Radio 4 programme. The book had been chosen by Tim Coates, former managing director of Waterstones and now boss of Bilbary, the innovative ebook retailer. On the programme with him was top comedy producer Jon Plowman, and the discussion was led by presenter Harriett Gilbert. Here's an abridged transcript of the programme.

TC: I've chosen a book called *Dear Miss Landau* by James Christie. It's a true story, it's an autobiographical story. I declare my hand: I think it's the best book I've read for 10 years. I thought it was absolutely wonderful. The story is that James is autistic; he has Asperger's Syndrome. I think he's approaching the age of 50 now and his condition was only diagnosed six or seven years ago, so he had lived with this all his life and no-one had told him what it was. He describes beautifully accurately, clearly, what it's like to have Asperger's Syndrome and what it means in daily life: he cleans lavatories; he's been a librarian because he's obsessive about cataloguing things; he's a boxer; his father was a civil servant. And then what happens is he watches television and falls hopelessly for a star on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, which I'd never seen - but which I've now become devoted to after reading this book. As could happen to anybody, he completely falls for this very attractive actress and he writes her

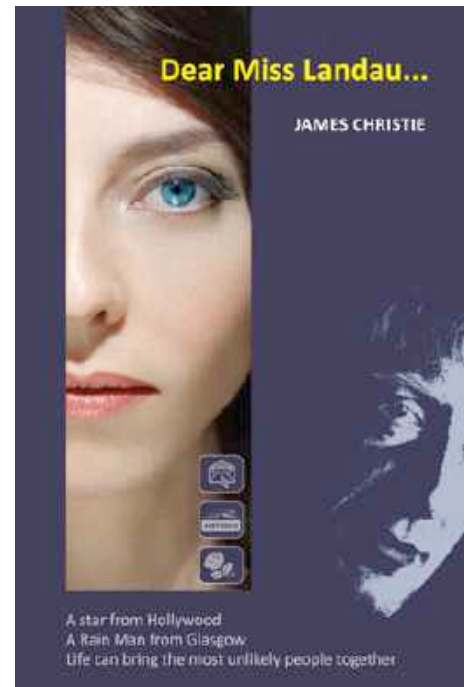
a letter, to which he attaches a possible script for further episodes of the series. Then he goes to the National Autistic Society office in Glasgow, and James describes their reaction to his suggestion that he needs to go to California to try and find this lady. I won't tell you what happens because it's just



magical from beginning to end, but the description of how the National Autistic Society responds, at the very end of the book, when James comes in and says 'I have written a book about this whole story, but I don't know what it is - is it a travelogue, is it something to do with vampire slaying, and they say 'no, James'... and I'm not going to tell you what they said because the last page of the book is just so brilliant.

HG: What about you, John - is it brilliant?

JP: Well it's jolly good. I wouldn't have read it had it not been for this programme, so thank you. I now know far more about Aspergers than I knew before. There's a little bit early on where he meets the psychiatrist who says 'your verbal IQ is in the top one percent of the population, but your performance IQ is only in the top 39 percent'. James says 'you mean I'm part near-genius and part low-grade moron?' The understanding of what that is is rather good. The bit that worried me, and I say this as somebody who from time to time has tried to get hold of people in



Hollywood ... getting to the assistant of the assistant of the agent is tough enough. And in a way what I would have preferred is if the publisher had put in the thing he wrote about *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, because I think as a non-*Buffy* person ... I wanted to know a bit about what it was that he'd written that had made it possible for people in LA to say 'OK - come over.'

HG: As well as opening up the world of Aspergers, it opens up this amazing world of fanfiction - it's not just *Buffy* that gets its fanfiction writers - a whole load of fantasy and science fiction ...

TC: And actresses all over the world must get fan mail from people all over the world every day.

JP: Lots of writers write episodes of things, partly as a way to find out how to write, and partly as a way to get jobs on the writers' team.



Tim Coates: 'The book is magical from beginning to end'

HG: For me, getting inside James Christie's mind was quite seriously interesting because you get a bit fed up with fiction where characters with Aspergers or autism are there as a device, in order to explore the meaning of truth or goodness, or whatever it is. And this absolutely isn't *The Curious Incident* or *Rain Man* or *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, or *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*. This is somebody who really has to live with Aspergers, describing his world for us, and it's riveting to see the world as this terrifying and confusing place that it is for him, but also to understand practical things. I mean, for instance, he makes it clear that if he says to you 'would you like a cup of tea?' you do not say anything as confusing as 'well, if you're having one...' You say 'yes, thank you' or 'no'. It's that kind of clarity that he needs from people. And he's remarkably brave: he goes on a journey and when he's about to board the plane, you'd think he was going to the ends of the earth on a raft - it's such a big adventure for him ... The downside of that for me was that some of the qualities that are inherent to having Aspergers - for instance, he has very little sense of



Harriett Gilbert: 'This is as close to the truth as you can get'

self. He doesn't know how to do self-deprecation or sense of the absurd, so he will tell you earnestly what a good sense of humour he has or how he is a very fit man for his age ...

TC: ... He has to do that. Self-deprecation can come out of writing without you contriving it. I'll just read a paragraph: 'It was January 31st 2009. I was going up to the West Highland town of Glenfinnan for the annual general meeting of the Friends of Glenfinnan Station Museum, for no particular well thought-out reason. I had brought a green Pukka pad jotter with me to make notes.' And that's the moment he starts writing the episode of his story. I think it's a very particular kind of person who would have been going to the Friends of Glenfinnan Station Museum and that tells me everything about him that I want to know. And there's another bit where, totally out of the blue, he says he goes down to the gym to fight with the boxers there. It's just such a mixture of characters in the same person. It's wonderful.

JP: It's not quite true to say there's no humour in it. There's a bit where he's in America (and we should say that one of the good



Jon Plowman: 'It's jolly good. I wouldn't have read it had it not been for this programme'

things of the book is that he walks everywhere - nobody in America walks anywhere - so he sees things...

HG:... and he talks to people. Any panhandler or rough sleeper that he meets, he gets into chatty conversation with.

JP: And he arrives hours early for buses and hours early for planes. There's a moment when he's in the West Coast and he's been staying in hostels, which he describes very well, and as a treat books into a Best Western. And he describes going to the clerk and the clerk tries ... to engage him. He starts talking about credit cards and downpayments and some over-complicated twaddle, and: 'I let him ramble on for a while then I raised an eyebrow and brought him to a halt. "OK, pilgrim," I said. "Let's go back to basics: you give me a room, I pay you money. Capiche?"'

HG: And the one thing you feel absolutely confident about reading this book, is that what you are getting is the truth. Everyone says that all memoirs, all autobiographies distort the truth one way or another. I think as close to the truth as you can get is what you're getting here. ■



Passion for the Park

An extract from the new book by Stephen Wade on the joys and pains of amateur football

My male relatives were not exactly articulate about football. I would go to watch Don Revie's Leeds United at Elland Road with Dad, uncles and friends, all in their long overcoats, and it would seem a grey, dour experience until the kick-off. The entire ritual build-up to the match would be shrouded in that particular sadness that comes from a sense of doing penance. The walk, from Beeston down the slope into Holbeck, was silent. Then the queue and the negative remarks. The crush and the fear seemed to be part of a boy's education in this Yorkshire brand of suffering.

At a cup match once, Leeds against Everton, I was genuinely terrified, and was lost in a sea of smelly solid male figures loaded down with the gloom of negative thought. But I struggled through to find the other older male Wades after a while – still in the same place. The usual wit said one of his favourite lines: "The pitch is

lookin' good. I think they buried a few..." and the men felt obliged to laugh.

So where was the seed planted? The seed that would only germinate when I had left school and was drawn to football on the park as some kind of test? It came from what happened after kick-off. Slowly, inevitably, these quiet men would become articulate. They gasped at the sheer lyrical grace of John Giles or Alan Clarke, and at the powerful, manly clearing header of Paul Madeley. I came to realise that this was the expression of their souls. Those glum tradesmen, without words to express their sensitivity in the routine week, found a kind of poetry and a certain praise in their words on the terraces. This is all before obscenity too. I recall a game when we were in the Scratching Shed at Elland Road and a man a few rows back swore too loudly. Several older men turned to face him, pointing out that

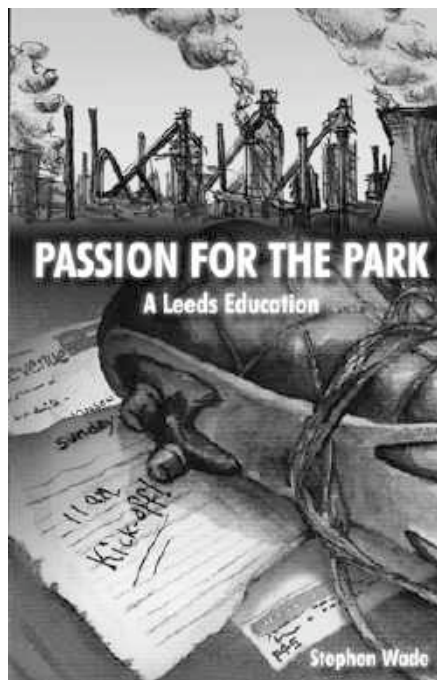
a young man there had his girlfriend with him, and could the language be turned down? It was, with apologies.

In fact, the men would seem to enjoy finding the right words for particular qualities. You would hear the vocabulary of respect and maleness: plucky, tough, canny, quick as a lop (a fly) and great turn, lad! Highest praise of all seemed to be 'Good effort son!' when a shot was clever and just missed the net, or when a tackle was brave but ineffective.

In this way, I absorbed a credo: a gentlemanly philosophy that gave respect to the opposition and knew what fairness was. I knew only with hindsight that the Saturday ritual, from the walk to the ground to coming home in time for the reading of the classified results, was a confirmation that there was a Yorkshire soul under the dullness and the reluctance to talk about feelings. After all, in my clan, men turned away to weep in private at funerals. There was none of this bold Irish 'Sorry for your trouble, mate.' Nobody read poems either, although they liked the Methodist hymns.

When I turned out for the Sunday teams, then I had a vague feeling that I was a part of this genuine substance of life, the certainty that the actual touch of the turf, the green line of grass colour on your shorts and the mud in the face, was an integral part of the performance. I had absorbed the need to prove something, to be tested in some way. I had no understanding of the game, though. At school I had been one of the banished non-sporters, sent indoors to read or made to shiver in a dirty vest and pants while the real men played rugger or did circuit training. But at school it meant nothing because there was no call to be in a real community and to need to express your body and its strength and skill with style. You could be respected as a clogger, or stuck between the goalposts because you were the tallest lad in the class, but few had their heart in the games.

But the first taste of Sunday football, the first game that became responsible for the addiction later, was as eventful as destiny could make it. It had heroism and tragedy, and as much irony as Shakespeare at his best. My team, Rose Forgrove, were to play a village team somewhere north of Leeds. The day was raw; I bring to



Passion for the Park by Stephen Wade is an illustrated paperback, published by Chaplin Books at £8.99 and available from all good bookshops and internet booksellers. It is also available as an ebook for all platforms.

mind the sheer cold terror of the stinking changing rooms as I put on socks caked in mud, unwashed from the previous week, and then put on shorts that were too tight for me. The boots were the cheapest available, bought in Woolworth's. They were the primitive variety that old-timers will remember, with orange piping on and screw-in studs of hard plastic that never fitted properly. The shirt was stiff as a board. I walked out like an ageing old boiler with pile problems. There was a crowd of six and two dogs.

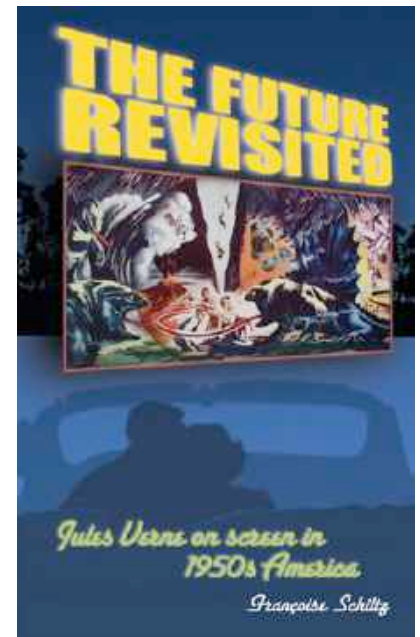
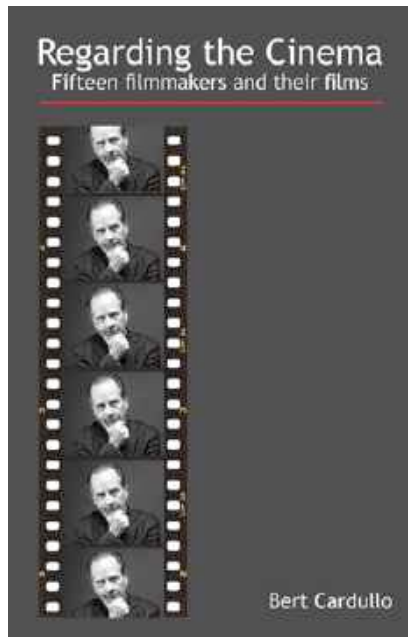
The trainer-manager, a man of about 60 with dreams of being Bill Shankly, had oranges in a brown paper bag, a bucket of water and a packet of Elastoplasts for his First-Aid back-up. He wore a flat cap and had a scarf tight around his neck that was fixed there all week, according to rumour. His only tactical advice was "Get the bloody thing upfield."

I was young and quite fast, so I was on right wing. But I had no skill or close control. All I could do was run with the ball. The result was that I was solidly tackled by an old clogger. My first run down the wing was nippy and impressive, but I never looked up. I know that I stared at the grass beneath me, and then suddenly was felled as I met what seemed like an oak log across my path, and I fell breathless.

But our goalie was magnificent, and kept the score down to 3-1. I didn't receive any good comments at all and I found, when I took my boots off, that both toenails on my big toes had come off completely. I spent a few months visiting a chiropodist. I also had bruises everywhere and walked stiffly all week. Our centre-half had a shiner and the captain moaned and whined about how slow we were from morn to dusk every working day before the next game. 'You don't shout! I mean, you're too polite. It's like a bloody vicarage tea-party... please pass the ball would you, old bean...'

But all this initiation in the formative years was settling in, so that by the time my North Kinley team was born, I was older and wiser, and had graduated from winger to sweeper. What I had learned by osmosis was how important it was to be a gentleman player, and to respect both the opposition and the rules. ■

In the next issue of Inside Story



■ An extract from *Regarding Cinema*, a new book of essays on 15 filmmakers from around the world by Bert Cardullo. In this insightful collection, the author finds that valuable middle ground between the film review and the academic paper: his writing never strays into the shallow, star-worshipping territory of today's reviewers - nor is it weighed down by elitist academic language and theory. Just intelligent writing that will make you want to look again at some of the world's classic films: from DW Griffith's *Way Down East*, and Billy Wilder's *Some Like it Hot*, to the European cinema of Antonioni, Bergman, Renoir and Bresson.

■ If the thought of reading Sophocles does not exact thrill you, then George Porter's new and provocative interpretation of *Antigone* will change your views forever. Many of us grew up reading lack-lustre translations of this great tragedy, written by Victorian professors and foisted upon unwilling generations of schoolchildren and students. In *Black Antigone*, George Porter has brought rhythm to the fore - particularly African rhythms - and his new interpretation of the play offers a vibrancy and immediacy that have been

missing for too long. Read an exclusive extract in the next issue of *Inside Story*.

■ Also in the next issue: an interview with Françoise Schiltz on why the most popular cinema versions of Jules Verne's novels have more in common with the preoccupations of 1950s suburban America than a vision of the future.

■ What's the future for the ebook? Paul Andrews of ebook specialists Andrews UK makes some predictions.

■ What would you like to see in *Inside Story*? Drop us an email with your comments and suggestions.

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