

*Tony
Hancock*

Archives Magazine

ISSUE 9
Mar 2016

AUDIO

THEATRE

New

Found

Script

written

for

Tony

Hancock

VARIETY BANDBOX

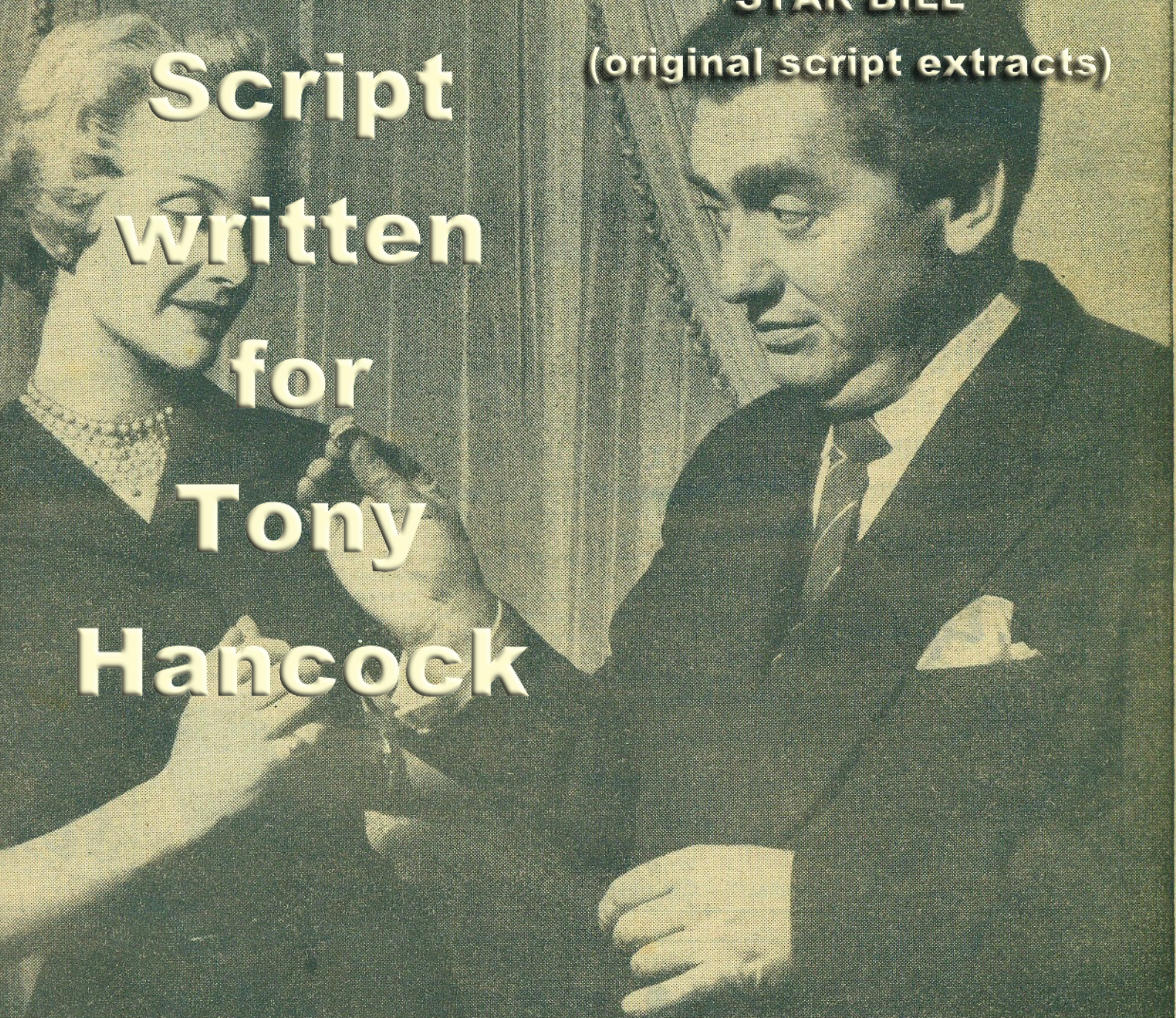
CALLING ALL FORCES

FORCES ALL STAR BILL

PRICE THREE PENCE

STAR BILL

(original script extracts)



The Online Magazine of the Tony Hancock Archives

TONY HANCOCK

"VARIETY BANDBOX"

9th January 1949

Page One

I want you to imagine that it's cold and wet, the scene is a small seaside town in the middle of summer, you're sitting on the sand, the umbrella raised as the rain beats softly down, you're patiently waiting for the commencement of the local concert party probably the worst concert party, complete with ancient jokes and aspiring tenor and so on, the curtain jerks slowly back and the Tatty Follies are about to begin - so on with the show.

(original music)

On with the show
We're here to greet you and we'd like you to know,
That when we meet you, troubles fly away
The skies are grey,
The clouds will all roll over till another day.
And now we'd like you to meet,
The people who will make your fun and laughter complete.
I'm Bertie Higginbottom and I'll make you smile
And I will serenade you for a little while,
I'm the brightest young sourbrette that you have ever seen,
And I'll impersonate for you the stars of stage and screen.
So on with the show, ring up the curtain and it's on with the show

"COLONEL BOGEY" (Comic's intro).

By gow, it's grand to be back here at Tatty on Sea. I've got a couple of funny stories here for you - I think they'll make you laugh. I were coming along to the theatre the other day, a fella came up to me he say's "Joe", he say's, "D'you know why chicken cross road?" He say's "Well, I'll tell you, it's for some foul Reason". Aye, well, we'll not bother with that one... I've got a bit of poetry here for you... There was a young lady from Ryde, who ate some green apples and died, the apples fermented inside the lamented, and made cider insider inside. By gow, yon were a hot 'un. Aye well, we've got 'em well laffin now, so I'll not delay, I've got a young fella in't wings here, his name is Sinclair Farquar, he's a tenor, and he's going to sing for you "Shine Through My Dreams", I hope you like it.

"SHINE THROUGH MY DREAMS" (Novello) CHAPPELL

Every region I have wandered,
Sleeping, walking,
Makes my weary heart grow fonder,
Like a lingering star,
Abandoned in the night,
Wondering where you are
I sit at home and sigh
Oh Flame - I say! - that flickers from afar - shine.
I'm terribly sorry.

"KNIGHTSBRIDGE MARCH" (Coates) CHAPPELL

Ladies and gentlemen, I shall now have great pleasure in giving you a few impressions of stars of stage, screen and radio. My first I believe is entirely original, I think I am right in saying it has never been presented on any stage before, at any time, in any country - ladies and gentlemen I give you, Charles Laughton in "Muntiny on the Bounty"..... Mr Christian.....

TONY HANCOCK

“VARIETY BANDBOX”

9th January 1949

Page Two

“ANCHORS AWEIGH” (Zimmerman) F.D&H

Thanks very much, and now ladies and gentlemen, I feel that up to now we've had a certain amount of levity, jocularity, laughter and gaiety and I do feel that the time has come to strike a rather more serious note in the programme, so ladies and gentlemen, put the children under the seats, while I pull my hair over my face to get right into the character of the Hunchback of Notre Dame. Where are they?..... oh there you are, I'm terribly sorry, got the hair in my eyes, couldn't see... Once again Keith... I'm so ugly (co-operation from the band) I'm so ugly... The bells... The bells... THE BELLS. Nobody loves me ...sanctuary... sanctuary... sanctuary much.

And now these two cades of radio - Kenneth and George Western.

Scapa on the haybox with scanson on the skay
Forlip with the cranston on the line
Jayboy in the chipmunk and the omi on the tray
Forlip with the cranston on the line
Scarfan is the skipmak with a scarpment in the plee
Nante with the bullcut and the trampot at the goee
But scara scara and a flagnap on the ree
Forlip with the cranston on the lino.

Gag... All double talk.
Repeat last bit of song.

And now we come to the end of our show, so please join in with our usual rousing chorus song, lift the roof it doesn't belong to me. Oh, jolly good.

“A SONG TO FORGET” MSS Sid Colin / Steve Race

There's a good day coming, there's a good day coming,
There's a new day dawning in the sky.
There'll be no more queueing, there'll be no more blue in
And plenty doing in the sweet bye and bye.

Everybody shout it
Sing a song about it,
If you over doubt it you'll be blue
Oh, the drums are drumming,
Cos a great day's coming,
And about time too.

TONY HANCOCK (extract)
"VARIETY BANDBOX"
27th March 1949
Page One

PHILIP: Ladies and gentlemen, I have just been handed a note by the next act, it say I've got it, I've got it, the greatest act of all time, get your sets turned well up, never mind the neighbours they'll thank you for it. Well ladies and gentlemen, I've seen this act, and I can only say NO! So what can I do but apologise for Tony Hancock.

"SHINE THROUGH MY DREAMS" (Chapp)

TONY: Ternent, I think one of your boys played a wrong note, old man, keep them under control a bit.

PHILIP: Don't stand there making that horrible noise, get on with it.

TONY: What do you mean get on with it - what a way to speak to an artiste - a man who's got his bronze medal for bird imitations too.

PHILIP: Well, what are you going to do.

TONY: I don't know yet.

PHILIP: Well what do you usually do.

TONY: Don't be so harsh - I can't do me usual act, I usually put me head in a lions mouth - you haven't got a lion with you I suppose. I know, you can't get them, I haven't seen a lion for -----. Never mind they'll be back they'll be in every home ----- I think I'll do a bit of straight acting for you, I've just written a play called "Flames of Passion" or "The Firemans Wedding". And I play both parts myself, you'll enjoy this. I should put the kids under the seats though 'cause its powerful stuff this, one or two of you will probably pass out so I should have the smelling salts handy - the scene is between Captain Chipperfield Scott of the Fourteenth Gurkhas who is saying goodbye to his sweetheart Linda Goosebody on the eve of the Boer War - the door opens and he rushes towards her CRASH. What happened - got me spurs tied up in the carpet, get me busby out of the goldfish bowl ... Linda don't you know how much I love you. Oh Charles you're just pulling my foot ... No Linda I can't live without you ... Ha, ha, ha, Allo Allo Allo and I have to think of the regiment ... Linda, kiss me ... No Charles, I can't ... Linda please ... Now Charles, I can't.....
.....Why not? ... You're still on your horse ... I would not have come if I'd known this was going to happen, I'd have stayed in and bottled some jam. Never mind, back to work ... Linda, the regiment leaves tonight, I have to help Lady smith ... who's she ... O shut up, I wish you wouldn't keep chirping in, I shall be offering him outside in a minute y'know, yes I'm dangerous when I'm roused, you Want to see me break toast ... Linda, I made my mind up that before the regiment left, I would come here and press my suit ... this is a fine time to talk about ironing No, no, no ... dear, oh dear, I wish I'd never left Aston Villa, I was happy at Villa Park, I was constructive inside-right, then me arches dropped ... Linda marry me, Oh Charles, you're just being a silly billy ... Linda you're carrying on with another ... Yes Charles, ... Linda, I demand to know who it is ... No Charles, I can't tell you ... Linda who are you carrying on with.

TONY: I know Oh you know who is it then?

TONY: The regiment.

I should have brought the sealions ... Bark! ... You may laugh some of my best friends are sealions ... I was nearly engaged to one once. Well go on sing your romantic song ... How do you know I've got a romantic song ... They all have. They're killing me stone dead here -- never mind.

TONY HANCOCK (extract)
"VARIETY BANDBOX"
27th March 1949
Page Two

Remember the night by the dustbins,
We laughed we hadn't a care
You clung to me as closely
As my long winter underwear
What is it you've done to me
Is it love that's the question
This burning inside of me
Is it love or indigestion?

When the sideboard hit me, I didn't mind
These sentimental things have made our love devine
That sweet little restaurant,
Our own little venue,
I whispered sweet things and you,
Picked your teeth with the menu,
Our loves deepseated as a large pair of pants
Is it heartburn or is it romance.

TONY HANCOCK (extract)
"CALLING ALL FORCES"
25th February 1952
Page One

* Underlined text originally crossed out

TONY: MM Good evening MM Ladies and Gentlemen MM Tonight I shall have pleasure MM
In telling you the story of my life MM to which I hope you will listen intently MM
otherwise I shall have to come amongst you with a meatcleaver MM.
I stand here before you with my notes in my hand, and I would like to say first of all
X (£ , % ; - who typed this? Whoever it was, he will write out one thousand times -
I must not take the mickey out of sir. Sir needs sympathy. Sir has not been very well
- Sir is off his grub. Be fair, Sir is a white man.

But let me tell you the story, I - I (Murray plays Salut d'Amour) You'll have to
Excuse him - he hasn't worked since talkies came in. But on - picture this sensitive
lad living on a beautiful estate in Devonshire. You probably know the place. Just
outside Runstone is a hill - Castlereigh Hill. Below it is an old stone wall, a ditch ...
and then on the far side of the ditch there is an old-fashioned mansion surrounded
by tall poplars. I live in that ditch.

My father was a woodchopper by trade, but I never wanted to take up this profession,
that is until I started working with Andrews - my father was a strange man, very fond
of the open air, he loved exercising over the moors with dogs ... In fact, that is one
of my earliest memories, the sound of father's heavy breathing as he ran steadily
forward through the morning mist, and behind him the baying of the bloodhounds,
and the shouts of the warders.

He came to stay with us in the ditch for a while, as there was a large reward out for
anyone who turned him in ... Poor man ... With the reward Mother bought a house.
But this was no life for a spirited lad, no life for me with my great thirst for knowledge
(INT. And Gin!) Ah Ah Ah Cheeky pupil.

However, Dame Fortune smiled at us eventually. We had wealth and became people
of leisure, able to ride on the downs whenever we wished. I remember one day I
arose at six - rather earlier than usual, but then it was such a lovely evening. I put on
my riding boots, spurs, scarlet jacket and bowler, and with one bound I mounted my
thoroughbred chestnut bicycle.

It was hard going, cycling over the downs, as I painfully pedalled along, one question
burned in my mind. Who had stolen the saddle?

As the fresh country breeze blew through my hair, caressing my curls with gossamer
fingers ... I began to daydream. I had always thought of myself as a city-dweller at
heart, but now I suddenly realised that deep down I was really a countryman ... A
man of the soil ... I was close to the earth. I had fallen off my bike.

And that was how I met Cynthia, for I suddenly heard the sound of another bicycle.

As I lay there I looked up and saw her riding towards me, a vision of beauty and
loveliness. How can I describe the grace and dignity with which she rode over my
face. We talked for a while. She said she was going swimming in the lake, and
invited me to go with her, but I had to say no, as my bathing costume needed
repairing - there was a hole in the knee.

Cynthia came to live in the house next door to us. She wanted to be a great musician,
a great composer, and she would play the piano in her lonely room next door, play
all day and all night - sadly, thinking that no one listened, no one cared. She was
wrong, someone was listening, someone did care - Me. I hadn't slept for six weeks.
I could stand it no longer, throwing aside the groundsheet, gas-cape, two overcoats,
and other post-war bedding, I leapt from the ironing-board. I rushed next door.

"Cynthia" I said, "Cynthia", I love you. I've known many women in my time, but you,
you're different, you have a beard.

Night after night we were together Cynthia and I, she would play the piano, and I
would say "Cynthia I can't go on (Deep breathing). This thing is bigger than both of
us. (Deep breathing). Life is just a desert without you (Deep breathing), as I look
into your sea area Shannon, Fastnet, Rockall, Heligo - Ah Ah Ah that was a jolly
good idea slipping the gale warning into my notes, wasn't it, Flippin' band.

TONY HANCOCK (extract)
"CALLING ALL FORCES"
25th February 1952
Page Two

TONY: (cont) But this was love - Ah the happy hours we spent together, as I leaned over the piano, and as she played "Our Song". (MURRAY "Bunch of Coconuts"). Yes - "Our Song", that lifting, exotic melody - how can I recapture it. What were those beautiful words again? There they are all standing in a row ... big ones, small ones, some as big as your head. Ah yes. Then came the proposal. "Cynthia", I said, marry me, my darling, be mine. I can't afford a wedding ring, so please accept this knuckle duster (Sigh) - it isn't worth much, but it belonged to my mother. But she refused me. Perhaps it was because of my poverty. As I stood there in my threadbare clothes, my down at heel shoes, and my old hat, that hat with the battered brim, the crumpled crown, and the dirty, filthy, greasy-looking band. (Gentlemen of the orchestra demonstrate). No, No, Gentlemen, come back - my word I had them going for a minute there, didn't I. (Into school Song "Sir is kind, and sir is gentle").

TONY HANCOCK (extract)
"FORCES ALL STAR BILL"
6th January 1953

- GRAHAM: We don't want the dear boys to know what they are missing, so don't forget our motto Mr Ray - nothing saucy and sordid for the soldier boys. Bysie bye now. (GOES OFF SINGING)
- TED: Bysie bye. Well that, boys and girls, was Nigel Bowser Smythe of the War Office - fourth idiot on the left as you go in. But now folks, I know you are all waiting for a tune from my violin. Unfortunately it's broken, so I've had to do the next best thing. I've grown my eyelashes long and tied them to the end of a frying pan. And so now I would like to give you...
- EFFECTS: (THUDS OF LUGGAGE BEING BROUGHT IN)
- TONY: (OFF MIKE. CALLING) Alright now, bring me luggage over here. Mind how you go with me trinkets. Be careful with that big crate - there's a fortune in glassware in it. Look out!
- EFFECTS: (TERRIFIC CRASH OF CRATE FALLING TOGETHER WITH TINKLING OF GLASS)
- TONY: Fools! Ruined! There was tuppence on that one, fourpence on that one, tuppence here, threepence there...
- TED: Here, just a minute, just a minute, what's the meaning of this? Who are you?
- TONY: Stand back lad, the comics arrived. Just let me announce myself. Hang out the flags, raise a cheer, queue up girls, Hancock's here.
- (Applause)
- TED: Look, what do you mean by coming in here and interrupting the programme. I don't know you.
- TONY: You don't know me? Ray, my merry little moron, I am one of the famous stars of "London Laughs".
- TED: (REALISING) Why yes, of course. Vera - you've had your hair cut!
- TONY: Yes I had to, it was getting in my eyes and...ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Oh my word yes, highly comical that was. Yes, old Hancock's taking a liking to you. Now belt up before he takes a sledge hammer to you.
- TED: Look, what are you doing here anyway?
- TONY: What am I doing here? I've been booked as the resident funny man on this programme. Now move aside and take notes. Laugh a line Hancock, the comical compere is now in session. Hello, hello.
- TED: That's 2 L.O.
- TONY: I know, we're using old gags tonight. Right here we go.
(MUSIC HALL COMIC - VERY QUICKLY)
A very funny thing happened to me on the way to the studio tonight. I say, I say, I say, why did the chicken cross the road...I don't wish to know that.....a little monologue...who was that lady I saw you with last night..... I don't wish to know that either... a little monologue...if a herring and a half costs a penny and a half, how many apples in a barrel of grapes.... I have no idea... a little monologue....old Hancock's doing his nut here playing two parts. See how he jumps from each side of the microphone. How does he do it.

TONY HANCOCK (extract)
"STAR BILL"
14th March 1954

TONY: Ah, good evening Mr Buchanan.

JACK: Good heavens - a coal sack with legs.

TONY: (ICY) This is my dinner jacket.

JACK: Yes - half of it's still on there.

TONY: Ha! Ha! Oh my word, two on the trot eh? (ON MIKE) Don't worry Hancock lovers, your favourite boy is about to cope with this obstroperous 'Erbert. (ALoud) Any More of those and I'll flatten him with one of my broadsides.

JACK: We're not going to do the boumps-a-daisy?

TONY: Ha! Ha! Three nil and we've only just kicked off. I wonder what the Comedians Year Book has to say about this. Ah here we are - Chapter 3. "Crushing retorts to Flash Harrys who are coming it." (MUMBLES TO HIMSELF) Ha! Ha! That's a good one. This'll have him. Right. Go. Mr Buchanan - do you like sweets?

JACK: Why - yes.

TONY: Then how would you like a gob-stopper?

JACK: I'd love one. Where is it?

TONY: On the end of me fist. Hello!

MOIRA: Now Tony, behave yourself - that's no way to talk to our guest.

TONY: (HURT) Well, he comes on here dressed up like a dogs dinner and tries to make old Hancock look a right Toby jug. Who is he anyway? Look at him - Fred Astaire with skin.

MOIRA: I'm sorry about this Jack - you see..he's jealous. He hates anybody who's better looking than he is.

JACK: So?

MOIRA: He hasn't got a friend in the world.

GRAHAM: Speaking of Fred Astaire, Mr Buchanan, I saw that film you did with him - "Band Wagon". I thought you were wonderful. Your dancing was marvellous - you were much better than fred Astaire...oo...ever so much better. In fact, I think you're the greatest dancer in the world.

JACK: Why thank you Mr....

TONY: Crawler.

GRAHAM: In fact I was wondering if you would do a bit of dancing for us tonight?

TONY: What do you think this is? Amateur night? The only one who's going to do any Dancing round here is me - I'll do an exhibition tango with me partner.

MOIRA: A big hand please for Hancock and Jumbo.

TONY HANCOCK (extract)
"STAR BILL"
21st June 1953
Page One

TONY: And that of course was "They Call the Wind Maria", sung by the George Mitchell Glee Club. And any moment now I'm expecting the door to open.

EFFECTS: DOOR OPEN

TONY: And to see a beautiful young girl come in and walk over to me.

EFFECTS: GIRL. FOOTSTEPS COMING ON MIKE

TONY: Put her arm round my neck, raise her head up to mine, gaze straight into my eyes, take a deep breath and say in a voice throbbing with passion...

GERALDINE: Anthony, you've been drinking again.

TONY: Geraldine!

APPLAUSE

TONY: Hello Geraldine. Well, how did you enjoy our little outing in Splithead?

GERALDINE: Don't you mean Spithead?

TONY: No. Somebody bashed me over the bonce with a bottle of Vodka.

GERALDINE: Well, I thought it was wonderful, Tony.

TONY: I know, I saw you. Disgusting. Making eyes at all those Russian sailors.

GERALDINE: Well, at least they were safe.

TONY: What do you mean?

GERALDINE: They were the only sailors down there who knew the meaning of the word "No".

TONY: Ah, but what a magnificent spectacle it was. The ships lit up all night...

GERALDINE:and you lit up all day. Honestly Anthony, I was ashamed of you. They invite us aboard the "Eagle" and ask you if you'd like to watch the review from under the gun barrel, and you come back four hours later blind drunk.

TONY: Gun barrel? Blimey, I thought they said rum barrel.

GERALDINE: And what an exhibition you made of yourself after that. Floating on your back behind the procession and shouting out "Put some more water in the bath Mrs Higgins, my boats are running aground."

TONY: Yes, but I.....

GERALDINE: And as for what you did during the firework display, well really.

TONY: What do you mean?

GERALDINE: (DISDAINFUL) Sticking a sparkler in each ear, doing handsprings along the deck and saying "look everyone, I'm a Catherine Wheel". There's no doubt about it, Anthony, you really must try to improve your manners.

TONY: Improve them? My manners are impeccable. Didn't I help the Admiral of the Fleets wife off with her fur coat?

TONY HANCOCK (extract)
"STAR BILL"
21st June 1953
Page Two

GERALDINE: Yes, that's true. We had a postcard from her this morning. She wants to know if she
Can have it back now.

TONY: She can have her fur coat back, but I'm keeping her rings.

GERALDINE: How did you get her rings?

TONY: I shook hands with her, didn't I?

GERALDINE: Oh, Anthony, I really don't know what I'm going to do.

TONY: Why not do what everyone else is going to do? Sit back and listen to the lovely
voice of one of Britains leading stage and cabaret stars - MISS ELIZABETH WELCH.

APPLAUSE

ELIZABETH: Thank you, everybody, and good evening Tony. It is very nice to be on the programme.

TONY: The pleasure is all ours. And with a voice as lovely as yours, is it any wonder?

ELIZABETH: Why what a coincidence, that's the title of the song I'm going to sing.

TONY: I know, and please accept my apologies for such a corny lead-in.

TONY HANCOCK (extract)
"STAR BILL"
26th July 1953
Page One

GERALDINE: Graham, have you seen Tony?

GRAHAM: Yes, but I'll get over it.

GERALDINE: No seriously - he's wearing a ten gallon hat - check shirt - boots and spurs and a holster.

GRAHAM: Don't worry - we all go through that phase...

GERALDINE: Yes, but he has a six-gun as well.

GRAHAM: He'll be alright when he's run out of caps.

GERALDINE: Shhhh....here he is.

TONY: Howdy folks - mighty fine...have a ceegar -where's the chow (ORDINARY VOICE)
Well, how do I look...Authentic?

GRAHAM: Not quite authentic....more psychopathic.

TONY: Look...Gene Autry hat - Gene Autry shirt - Gene Autry six-guns - Gene Autry gun-belt.

GERALDINE: I know....Gene Aurty's our guest.

TONY: Oh you've told them then - I wanted to keep it a surprise.

GRAHAM: If you're wearing all Gene Autry's Clobber - what's he wearing, a Tony Hancock loincloth?

TONY: You ain't seen nothing yet - watch this.... (WHISTLES) Here boy.

EFFECTS: HORSE COMMING ON

GERALDINE: Oh, isn't he a dear.

EFFECTS: PAT, PAT, BODY OF HORSE FALLING. NEIGH

TONY: What do you want to pat him for?

GERALDINE: Well...I only...

TONY: Never mind. Help my lift him up.

GRAHAM: If I may be so bold - what's the idea of all this elaborate fandangelery.

TONY: Don't you see...Gene Autry loves horses and things, and when he comes here - he'll feel right at home.

GRAHAM: Oh, I get you - a smart piece of figuring out, Pardner...he'll think he's right back at the old Corral...yeah..well I guess I'll just go for a drive down the sunset trail....

TONY: Don't overdo it.. You'll drive him up the sunset pole...

TONY HANCOCK (extract)
"STAR BILL"
26th July 1953
Page Two

GRAHAM: OK. OK. Waal how are you Mr Autry. Nice to have you with us...put it there...

TONY: Wait a minute...I'll practice that bit...How are you Mr Autry...Nice to have you with us
...put it there...sorry Mr Autry, did I squeeze too hard.

GRAHAM: What an imagination.

GERALDINE: Waal, I'll mosey along and rustle up some flapjacks.

TONY: Pardon.

GERALDINE: You heard me big boy.

VARIETY BANDBOX
 CALLING ALL FORCES
 FORCES ALL STAR BILL
 and
 STAR BILL



GRAHAM:

We do
 Mr Ray
 SINGII

, so don't forget our motto
 ie bye now. (GOES OFF

TED:

Bysie
 fourth
 from m
 grown
 would

the of the War Office -
 you are all waiting for a tune
 the next best thing. I've
 ng pan. And so now I

EFFECTS:

(THUD

TONY:

(OFF M
 go with
 Look o

over here. Mind how you
 fortune in glassware in it.

EFFECTS:

(TERRIFIC CRASH OF CRATE FALLING TOGETHER WITH TINKLING OF GLASS)

Tony- Moira Lister - Graham Stark in STAR BILL

TONY:

Fools! Ruined! There was tuppence on that one, fourpence on that one, tuppence
 here, threepence there...

TED:

Here, just a minute, just a minute, wh

re you?



Ted Ray(1905-1977)

TED:

Calling All Forces

TONY:

I know, we're using old gags tonight. Rig



Charlie Chester(1914-1997)

Calling All Forces



Geraldine McEwan 1932-2015

Star Bill 1952-1953

A very funny thing happened to me on the way to the studio tonight. I say, I say, I say,
 why did the chicken cross the road...I don't wish to know that either...who
 was that lady I saw you with last night...I don't wish to know that either... a little
 monologue...if a herring and a half costs a penny all the way, how many apples in a
 barrel of grapes... I have no idea... a little monologue... and Hancock's doing his nut
 here playing two parts. See how he jumps on the phone. How does
 he do it.

with Tony Hancock, Graham Stark
 with the
 George Mitchell Glee Club,
 and Stanley Black
 and his Concert Orchestra



Variety Bandbox



1944 -1953

By Andy Foster & Steve Furst

(text includes extract from Tony Hancock's script - 9th Jan 1949)

"It was billed as the show that presented 'the people of variety to a variety of people', and was for many years the BBC's weekly variety highspot. It was conceived as Bandbox Variety and re-christened by a typing error.

Variety Bandbox was first transmitted on the General Overseas Programme in December 1942, moved to the General Forces Programme in March 1944 and ended on the Light Programme after nearly 500 editions in September 1953.

Originally an entertainment for forces overseas, the show opened with a snatch of 'I Love to Sing' by the band and ended with the audience singing, 'Let's Have Another One'. Earlier editions were dedicated to overseas newspapers such as the Ceylon Review, and the Basrah Times and were introduced by a Mistress of Ceremonies, usually a glamorous film actress such as Margaret Lockwood, Frances Day or Googie Withers. Later editions were introduced by Philip Slessor. Fast-moving, with the minimum of announcements, Bandbox had a high comedy content (the show featured a resident comedian), adapting to changes in public taste with its policy of finding fresh talent and building new stars.

'If an artist is unknown to me, I give him or her the usual routine audition, and if it turns out well I include the act in a short audition programme in front of the Bandbox audience and before the Bandbox broadcast begins. That puts the artist in his right element and we find out what he can really do' (Bryan Sears, producer, 1949).



Frankie Howerd



Frankie and Tony on stage

Among the Bandbox discoveries were: Tony Hancock, Reg Dixon, George Williams, Dick Emery, Derek Roy, Robert Moreton, Harry Secombe and Douglas ('Cardew') Robinson. Beryl Reid was the first comedienne to be given a regular spot from 9th March 1952.

The most successful of all the Bandbox discoveries was a nervous young Yorkshireman, who auditioned for the producer Joy Russell-Smith in 1946. With previous experience in an army concert party, he actually auditioned for the demob show *They're Out*. He was almost paralysed by nerves. Russell-Smith claimed she had never heard anything like it in her life.

He was booked for three shows. Billed as 'The Borderline Case', his first broadcast was 1st December 1946. The *Radio Times* for that week described him as 'a comedian who is really different in that he doesn't tell a single gag', going on to say that the producer 'wouldn't let us into the secret of Frankie Howerd's humour because it might take some of the surprise from the first show.'

'I was on the air for seven minutes,' he said, 'and they were seven minutes of sheer torture. I spluttered and stammered, unconsciously pulling faces and running my hand through my hair.'

Within weeks Frankie was a huge success, his hesitant, stream-of-consciousness style was then devastatingly new. Although giving the impression of disorder, his act was carefully rehearsed down to the last comma. Soon after his debut Frankie virtually re-invented his technique, specifically for the radio, deliberately mispronouncing certain words and making full use of his remarkable vocal range: 'Ladies and gentlemen - I was a-mazed!' 'The dial and the vocal chords just don't go together. A lot of people, I am told, expect to find that I'm about fifty, short and fat and wearing a spiv suit!' (1950 interview).

He became resident comedian almost immediately, broadcasting on alternate weeks with Derek Roy, with whom he established a mock rivalry. Soon he was doing three solo spots instead of the usual one. Frankie stayed until 20th March 1949. He became resident again (this time in tandem with Reg Dixon) from 16th October 1949 to 2nd April 1950, taking part in 60 shows in all.

One regular spot of 1950 invited the listener into the consulting-room of the eminent philosopher Professor Francis Howerd; his clients were famous stars who came seeking advice. Among them were Dirk Bogarde (who, since appearing in the film *The Blue Lamp*, had a compulsion to rob everybody he met at gunpoint; the Professor's advice was to leave the gun at home); Margaret Lockwood, Richard Burton, Robert Newton, Tony Hancock, Richard Attenborough and Gilbert Harding.

When he finally left on 2nd April 1950 (he made a few more broadcasts as a guest, including the last Bandbox of all on 28th September 1952), he was replaced by a show within a show, *Blessera Hall*, a hotel sitcom in which the entire cast were Peter Sellers and Miriam Karlin. Between them they played Major Manoeuvre (the manager), Giuseppe Chipolata (the head waiter), Herbert Perks (the night porter), Mrs Bucket (the char) and Mrs Snitchpuff (a foreign refugee). They even impersonated famous artists in the hotel cabaret.

There was an advance visit to *Blessera Hall* on 26th March 1950, and the series proper began on alternate weeks from 16th April 1950 to 21st July 1950. From 28th May 1950 Jimmy Handley joined the cast. There were nine editions in all.

The first resident comedian was Hal Monty, followed by Derek Roy, Albert Modley, Reg Dixon and Arthur English. At the beginning of 1951, there were four resident comedians broadcasting on a rota system: Tony Hancock, George ('I'm riot well') Williams, Vic Wise and Bill Kerr.

The second series began on 8th October 1951. The resident comedians were Al Read, Arthur English, Reg Dixon, Harry Locke, Robert Moreton and Bernard Miles.

As well as variety turns, there were features such as 'Composer Cavalcade', 'Continental Corner', 'Songs of Yesterday', 'The Middle Eight' and 'Ring in the New'.

Bandbox regulars included: Issy Bonn, the Western Brothers, Avril Angers, Tessie O'Shea, Vic