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# TV TIMES

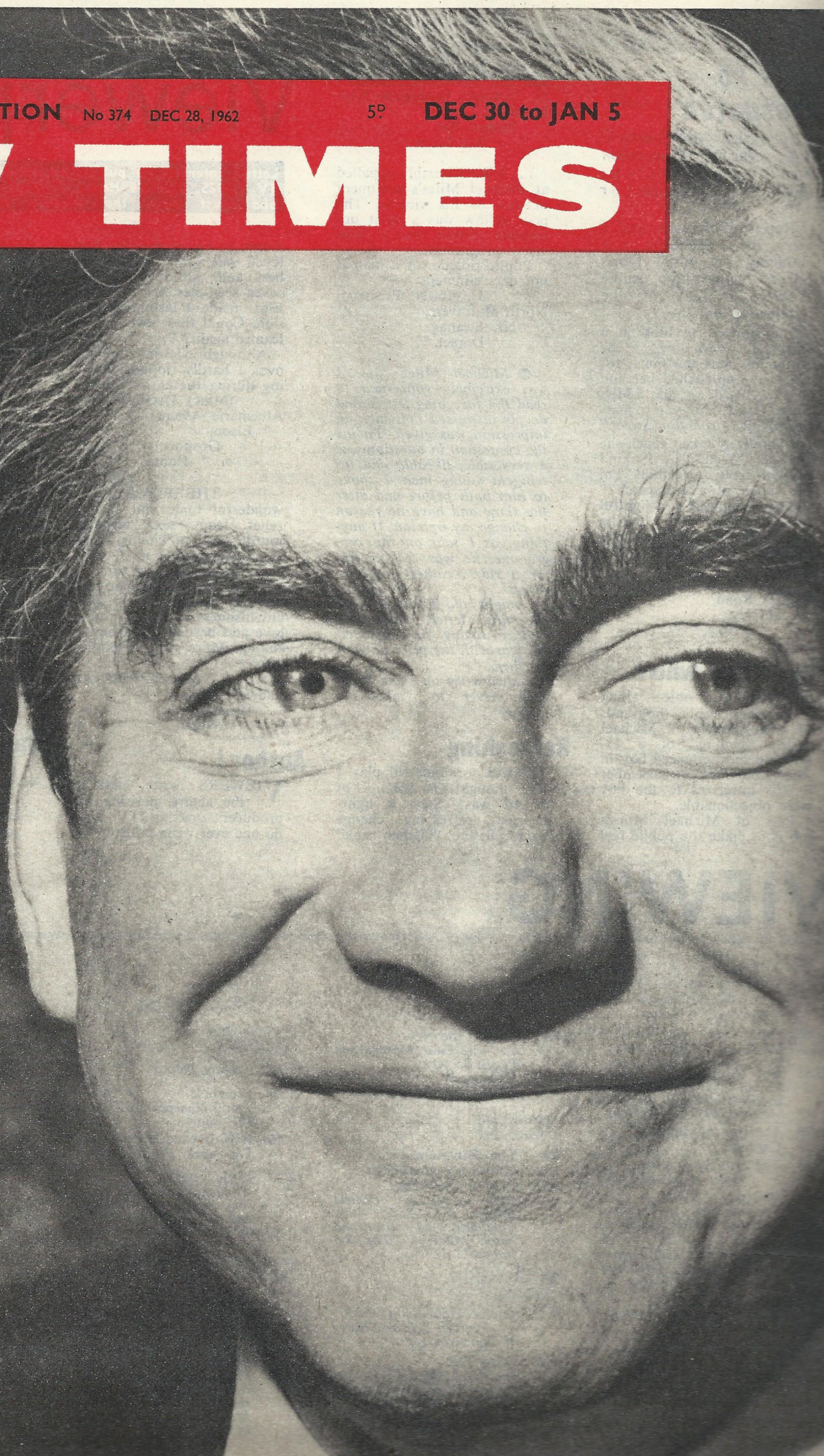
## HANCOCK

*Thursday*

*8.30 p.m.*

Hancock's Year? What is it going to be? Says astrologer Maurice Woodruff as a special prediction: "Anyone who tries to fool Tony Hancock should make certain that he knows what he is up against . . . he possesses a will of iron and it would be rare to hear of a failure in anything he undertook. During the January to March period it would not be a surprise to hear that he receives a high award for his work . . . he could expect, too, to make money from an investment which could be either liquid or gas. And, though he should watch his weight and his circulation, the next 12 months will generally be busy and satisfactory."

To see what Woodruff predicts for you turn to our special four-page supplement inside And for Hancock's past life—see pages 6-7



# HANCOCK



In this series (which begins on Thursday) Hancock is the man standing on the street corner, watching avidly as the world passes him by.

He's a lonely figure and we freeze him there, I suppose, as a symbol of all those street-corner-stander-attenders who never seem to participate in life but are faced, because of their unfortunate personalities, with playing the unjoyous role of outsider.

He's still the old, rootless Hancock living in digs, but the new series will concentrate more on plot and story-line than the subtleties of character which were his great strength in the past.

The essence of each situation is that he has to go out and pursue life—it never comes to him. And when he does get himself involved, he can only snarl things up because of his rather pompous, unfortunate manner.

Yet he is forced to continue chasing life, whatever the consequences.

In one episode, for instance, he witnesses a bank robbery. This would complicate things for most of us; for Hancock it spells almost total disaster.

He begins blabbing loudly about what he has seen, glad of an audience. The bubble bursts when he gets a warning from the gang that they plan to silence him. The loud-mouthed hero abruptly turns into a quivering, jelly-like mass of nerves.

Nothing, of course, can stop him. Episode by episode he is drawn irresistibly to that street corner, magnetised into another predicament.

Without really intending to, he suddenly finds himself impersonating a Group Captain. Next he finds himself entangled with the Secret Service.

Once, he even falls in love. Hancock *in love*? But don't worry, he *resents it*.

Hancock will continue without a foil. All the other characters in the series will be strictly straight — they are people like Denholm Elliott, Francis Rowe, Peter Vaughan and Dennis Price.

They will not be playing for laughs at all, for the essence of the situation is that the story-line should be credible.

It is only with the intrusion of the pompous Hancock character that the whole thing begins to become zany.

MY whole sordid story, as they say, began in Hall Green, Birmingham, on May 12, 1924.

On that day Anthony John Hancock was born.

Frankly, not to put too fine a point on it, those early hours in my life are all a bit vague today. In fact, there is little I can recall at all about my first two or three years, a mental lapse on which I prefer not to dwell.

After all, that sort of thing can give you complexes in much the same way as someone asking you — and in all seriousness, too — what your earliest childhood recollection is.

Answer too promptly and you're marked down as glib. Pause too long and you are woolly headed. Either way you appear inadequate.

However, nursing as I have considerable delusions of adequacy for a number of years now, I answered as honestly as I could when that self-same question was fired at me — why do people always fire questions? — recently.

My first recollection of being alive, I said, is an egg-timer.

An egg-timer? An egg-timer,

I repeated with the assurance of a man who knew which way the sand trickled.

My questioners smiled indulgently. Who wouldn't?

But the plain fact is that my very first memory, pigeonholed, or should it be henholed, away with all the others, and there are so many, is of an egg-timer. Don't ask me why. My memories just happen to contain it.

Mind you, today, I boil a very good three-and-a-half-minute egg without having to glance at my watch once.

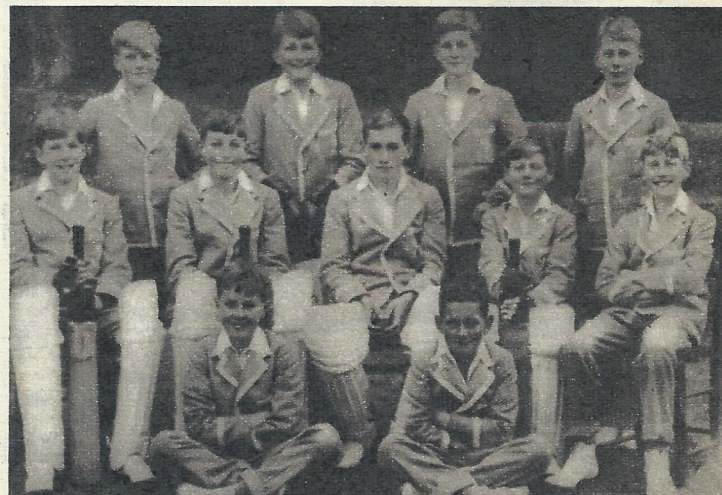
My next memory — and very vivid this one is — is of moving from Hall Green to Bournemouth when I was three years old.

What a brave band we were striking south that summer morning. Every hamlet, every village, every town we passed through accorded us a truly remarkable lack of attention, exceeded only by the complete anonymity of our arrival in Bournemouth itself.

But it is in Bournemouth that our story really begins.

When we lived in Birmingham my father was the manager of a shipping office—and pretty chaotic I should think it must have been for I don't think it was really his line.

The real love of his life was



Where's Hancock? In this picture right in the middle of things — as captain of his school prep XI



undoubtedly show business. He enjoyed nothing better than making people laugh. And though I think he would have been happier if he had become a full-time professional he never did.

He contented himself by performing at clubs, halls and Masonics in the Midlands and then later around Bournemouth, as a semi-professional, using his real name Jack Hancock.

My mother, who used to

## by Tony Hancock

play the piano for him, was, not unnaturally, the best audience he ever had — even if the act was flopping. She would frequently end up crying with laughter, although sometimes the only one who saw the joke.

In one of his other capacities — as a boxing referee — my brothers, Colin and Roger, and I, must have been the worst audience he ever had.

Regularly, we trotted along to his fights, sat ourselves down in free ring-side seats and promptly stood up and booed every decision he gave. Very popular we were, I don't mind telling you.

But I go too fast.

What took us to Bournemouth in the first place was that my father had bought a laundry there. Then he took a pub, then a hotel, which he knocked down and rebuilt.

We were constantly on the move. So much so, in fact, that I honestly never knew what it was to finish a conversation when I was young.

Hotel life breeds its own particular manifestations of chaos — especially a Terence Rattiganish *Separate Tables* type hotel in Bournemouth

with, on the one hand, a flow of theatrical personalities and, on the other, a solid core of elderly gentlefolk who have come to the coast to see out their days on their modest means.

When everybody was too busy to talk to me I resorted to the simple solution of dipping into the hotel petty cash and taking myself off to the pictures.

I saw so many pictures during those years just before and into my early 'teens. It didn't matter what was on. Provided it moved I was there.

But though we none of us, my brothers, mother or my father, enjoyed a family life as it is customarily understood — it is quite impossible when you are involved in running a hotel — it was a very rewarding period in my life. More than that, it was a very influential one.

To start with, it brought me into contact with all the acts that came to play the Pavilion Theatre, Bournemouth. People like Stainless Stephen, Clapham and Dwyer, the Houston Sisters, Elsie and Doris Waters — great acts of the day who were all friends of my father.

Through them I came to know a lot about life backstage in a theatre — my school cap was almost as familiar a sight in the wings of the Pavilion as the stage manager's pullover.

And I knew then that I was going to go into the business too. Though as what I didn't have the faintest idea. My father obviously approved, for he got me a film test when I was nine — though nothing came of it.

Although, as I say, it was the touring acts that added to my instinctive wish to get on the stage, it was that other hard core of residents that I was to draw upon so much for characterisation when I finally got there.

They were a splendid crew, dominated by several dowagers who used to sweep into the

dining room like galleons under full sail, with their frigates of female companions bouncing along nervously in their wake. What those companions put up with for the sake of a winter at Bournemouth!

At this time I was at school at Durlston Court Preparatory School at Swanage. And it was there I made my stage debut when I was 11. Or it was there I should have made it.

I was chosen to play the part of the Duke of Plaza Toro in *The Gondoliers* and then lost it because my voice broke. I used to write stories and such and act them for my schoolmates but on the stage they never seemed as funny as they did in the dormitory.

My next and last school was Bradfield College, Berkshire, where I did enough to get by academically and enjoyed myself immensely on the sports field.

But I left after a year; I had a real compulsion to get away and get on to the stage though I still—and I was 15 by now—didn't have any idea just what I was going to do.

About this time I decided a shorthand and typing course might stand me in good stead in the future so I took one before I did anything else. I



Hancock? Yes, a wartime portrait

still remember fondly beating out the old asdfg ;lkjh to music.

Pressure was brought to bear from certain quarters and eventually I had to take a job. So I went to work in a tailors shop. I spent exactly four hours sweeping the place up. Then I resigned.

The war had started now and my next job was at the Board of Trade where I performed the highly absorbing and intellectually demanding task of stamping, with a rubber stamp, plain pieces of paper.

Just that. For £2 10s. a week. That didn't last very long either.

As I tell you all this I can hear you asking where was Hancock the entertainer? You may well ask.

He was, in fact, gathering material. From anywhere. From stage acts, from jokes that other people got laughs with in pubs; all was grist to the mill. If it got a laugh, then into the act it went.

And I will be the first to admit that my material at that time wasn't original. Nor for that matter was anything else.

So that when George Fairweather, a Bournemouth postman whom my father had persuaded to go into the business a few years earlier, started taking a concert party called the Black Dominoes around the ack-ack bases and camps in the area he took me along with him, complete in my top hat, check jacket and co-respondent shoes.

We used to play in various villages as well as on Army camps, and I must say that I've seen more vicars disappearing out of side doors than practically anybody else in the business.

What mattered though was that I was in the business. But not for long. Within a year I was in the R.A.F. And off to war.

Next week: Tony Hancock continues his story.



*The Toerag, Bootsie and Snudge* — 7.30

## 6.45 Sports Outlook

WITH **GERRY LOFTUS**  
introducing Granada's own weekly sports programme  
PRODUCER **DAVID WARWICK**

## 7.0 Double Your Money

**HUGHIE GREEN**  
in the quiz game with the **£1,000 Treasure Trail**  
ORGANIST **Robin Richmond**  
*Questions and answers verified by Encyclopaedia Britannica*  
DIRECTED BY **ERIC CROALL**  
*Associated-Rediffusion Network Production*

## 7.30 Bootsie and Snudge

**ALFIE BASS** **BILL FRASER**  
IN THE STORY

### The Toerag

*Bootsie Bisley* ..... **Alfie Bass**  
*Claude Snudge* ..... **Bill Fraser**  
*The Toerag* ..... **Patrick McAlliney**  
*Policeman* ..... **Geoffrey Palmer**  
*Lift attendant* ..... **George Tovey**  
*Secretary* ..... **Norma Parnell**  
*Vincent Lackaday-Williams* ..... **Arthur Howard**

WRITTEN BY **BARRY TOOK** AND **MARTY FELDMAN**  
DESIGNED BY **STANLEY MILLS**  
DIRECTED BY **ERIC FAWCETT**  
PRODUCER **PETER ETON**

GRANADA TV NETWORK PRODUCTION

## 8.0 The Deputy

A new series of the popular Western  
STARRING

**HENRY FONDA**  
as *Simon Fry*

**ALLEN CASE**  
as *Clay McCord*

GUEST STAR  
**SUSAN OLIVER**

IN THE STORY

### The Deadly Breed

Chief Marshal Simon Fry meets a beautiful girl—a girl whose mother played an unforgettable part in his past . . .

## 8.30 Hancock

NEW

STARRING  
**TONY HANCOCK**

IN

### The Assistant

ORIGINAL STORY BY **RAY WHYBERD**  
WRITTEN BY **TERRY NATION**

WITH

**KENNETH GRIFFITH**  
as *Owen Bowen*

**PATRICK CARGILL**  
as *Mr. Stone*

**MARIO FABRIZI**  
as *Uncle Bunny*

**Annie Leake** **Rory Macdermot**  
**Jennifer Tippet** **Alex Farrell**

**Adrienne Poster**

AND GUEST APPEARANCE OF  
**MARTITA HUNT**  
as *Mrs. Hart*

MUSICAL DIRECTOR **DEREK SCOTT**  
DESIGNED BY **RICHARD LAKE**  
PRODUCER **ALAN TARRANT**

*MacConkey Presentation*

*ATV Network Production by arrangement with Bernard Delfont*

Tony Hancock writes on pages 6-7



Tony Hancock, right, pictured at rehearsals for his new ITV series — 8.30

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