



# The Merry Mawkin

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*Ray Hubbard, the last Norfolk horseman.*

PHOTO: EDITOR

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# A mardle with the editor

ASHLEY GRAY

I BEGAN this editorial with all the best of intentions. But things rarely go to plan, do they? With my mouse doing its utmost to avoid capture, I found myself confined in a ‘qwerty’ quandary – what *should* I write about I asked myself?

“Hen’t you tarned that there calendar over yit?” my wife interrupted, barging into my room and, without ceremony, unveiling the month of May on my wall-bound *Artists’ England* by Salmon.

“Shink b’now you orta know tha’s the fust of May!” she continued, throwing my desktop into disarray, flicking her yellow duster and disturbing my neatly-arranged platoon of pens and pencils. However, I’m pleased to say she stopped short of laminating my monitor with a superior smear-free sheen, though she pledged to come back later.

“I’d lorst all track o’ the time,” I confessed. But, don’t we all? Ask me what I had for lunch the day before yesterday and, likely as not, I’d be in the soup! But, if it came to three decades ago, I’d be right back there, sitting on the edge of the pavement, head stuck into the *Beano* and slarvering on a licorice root stick, engrossed in the adventures of Dennis the Menace.

We made our own amusement in those days, though never did anyone any harm. We respected our elders and betters, especially the local bobby on his beat. A less-than-respectful look on our part warranted a quick ding o’ the lug! We weren’t caught twice!

The first week in May was always a special time for us young’uns. There were customs to observe, traditions to keep, laid down over the ages, and scored in the woodwork on the underside of our desk lids. Even now, memories of those times still have not lost their magic – like fleeting moments, frozen in time, of one’s first true love.

On that first of May, many memories ago, the sun smiled down upon us youngsters from its lofty perch in a sailor-blue sky with naught but wispy-white candyfloss for company. This was the moment, since time immemorial, to bear witness to the old ways – the custom, *our* custom!

“First of May,” we chanted, chasing mawthers in their Sunday-best frocks, as they cavorted round the garlanded Maypole, skirt hems touched by laughing hands. “First of May, petticoat day!”

Thus ended our day of happy, harmless, fun – but there was more to follow...

“Second of May, stinging-nettle day!” we hallered, having ‘armed’ ourselves with freshly-picked bunches of the toothy-leaved *Urtica Dioica*, and lashing out in all directions.

It was fun; but not *quite* so harmless, especially when you found yourself on the receiving end!

“Third of May, jam-toe day,” we forewarned, ‘jamming’ on feet too slow to avoid each other’s enthusiastic stamping. If caught in the flurry of fancy footwork, not only did you suffer the torture of trampled toes but also having to go home with soiled shoes. But, *which* was worse?

“Jist yew *look* at yar shoes!” said Mother as I stepped indoors. “I go t’see if I know! What *hev* yew bin up to? Jist yew wearte till Father git home, yew little waarmin!”

Excuses, about it being ‘the custom’, fell upon deaf ears – but mine wholly rang later!

“What a load o’ squit!” declared my wife, looking over my shoulder, having returned, as promised, to continue with her dusting and polishing. “I dorn’t believe a word onnit! Where on arth yew git orl them there scatter-breaned idears from, beat me, that do!”

Her mastery of the Norfolk tongue is quite impressive, having been born in Scotland and bred in Birmingham...

“No, that I wun’t!” she said, adamant in her reminder that Solihull is to Birmingham as Sheringham is to the gem of the Norfolk coast!

It seems our Norfolk dialect may have been highly infectious as, when I first met my eventual wife-to-be she was working with a load o’ Sheri’num mawthers ’twixt pots and pans in the primary school kitchen.

“I reck’n that hatta be har dumplins that wuz the attraction, dorn’t yew, my ole bewties? Till we meet agin – do yew tearke care together!”



# Gotta put yar thinkun' cap on

THE BOY COLIN



JUST WHEN Oi thought Oi wuz gorn ter hev a dear when Oi hen't gotta think tew much along cum a message from Ashley: "Cum yew on, bor, thass toime fer anuther one a' yar literary pieces."

Oi hatta ask him wot he wuz a'torkin'

'bout 'course Oi din't know wot he meant boi 'literary', but he sune put me roight.

"Yew know," he say, "them bitsa squit wot yew allus wroite fer the *Mawkin*."

Oi thowt tew moiseif (how yew dew, dorn't cha) wot the heck kin Oi wroite 'bout this time. So Oi put down the pearper an' then that cum tew me. Oi'll hev a go 'bout wot they call the Media.

I're gotta say Oi find newspapers orlroight, dew yew git the roight ones. We allus hev the good ow *EDP* and the *Daily Express*. There's allus pletty a' puzzles in them ter keep yar ow brearn active but Oi get suffin' snotty dew Oi can't finish sum a' them ow Sudokos. Blast, Oi say ter moiseif, there's a blook on Tokyo somewhere a'laughing his hid orf course Oi'm pulling wot little hare I're got left out when Oi can't finish one a' his puzzles.

Oi loike a'readin' the Pink Un in the *EDP* 'specially if them boys up Carrer Rud hev notched up anuther three points. Hen't they dun well t'year ?

The National pearpers 'pare ter be fulla this Election jarb wot we're got cummin up. Toime yew read this yew'll know whose gorn ter be messin' about wi' our money. When Oi wuz in London a few week back Oi passed Downing Street and hollered, "Wot 'bout moi pension?" Nobody cum out ter answer that one! Still, who ever get in Oi dun't spose enny onnus will be na' better orf. Tha corst a' livin' keep gorn up tuppence a pint evra few months. I did try brewin' moi own at one toime but Oi med it sa strong that Oi dassn't drink it. Oi poured moost onnit down

the sink and we had a tiddly cockey fer weeks arter that.

Television ent much cop these dears ayther, is it? Orl we seem ter git is stuff wot we're sin afore. Dew the missus go out of a noight Oi allus switch it orf – 'less there's football on a' corse.

Oi loike ter listen ter moi music so Oi kin choose wot Oi loike. Dew yew hev the wireless on thass orl wot Oi call 'Lump and Bump' stuff. We yewsta git a bit of decent music on Radio Norfolk 'bout ten yare ago but they're gone orl 'Lump and Bump' now. Blast, Oi'm hevvin' a good ow moan, ent Oi? Oi'd moan orl tha more dew Oi hatta pay fer a licence!

Nowadays kids hev got them things wot Oi call 'Wiffys' where they play gearmes and puzzles on. They seem as thow they watta play tennis and golf in thare front rooms instead a'gorn out in the fresh air an' doin' onnit. Still, the air hen't bin too fresh leartly hev it wot wi' the volcearno 'ruptin'. That caused a helluva lot a' nuisance, din't it? Oi wuz glad Oi han't took one a' moi jaunts abroad dew Oi might still be thare now. We wanted some cash back from Iceland and they sent us ash – reckun they're luggy!

Missus riz ter the oocearshun th'other dear when Oi wuz eating some of har homemed soop. Oi say, "Whoi hev Oi got ash in moi soop?" She cum back wi' "Corse thass a no-fly zone!" Cor blast, Oi laughed. A blook down the rud from me reckon his house wuz covered in dust and smelled suffin' rotten of sulphur. Mind yew, thass allus bin loike that!

Thass good ter see tha sun, ent it? At last I're got the chance ter git out and tend ter the lovely crop a' dandelions in moi lawn. They're a ruddy nuisance but, as Oi say ter the Gal June, they dew put a bit a' colour inter the garden. Moi nearbor allus seem ter hev a better garden then I're got but dew that snow they orl look tha searme, dorn't they? Oi'm orf now. Oi kin smell the carrot and coriander a'bubblin' away. Mearke a change from salary, dorn't it ?

Hare yew go together.



# An interest in Norfolk literature

SID KIPPER LEARNS A POME



SID KIPPER is known for many things, from folk lore to original writing.

Here he further demonstrates his interest in great Norfolk literature.

“This pome we had to learn at school or you couldn’t take the hamster home for

the weekend. Mind you, due to traditional education cuts, it had been dead six months, which meant it weren’t such a privilege. On the other hand it took very little looking after, so you had more time free for pome learning. Which just go to prove that it’s half of one and six dozen of the other.”

**SIDKIPPER SIDKIPPER SIDKIPPER**

## CATCH A KIPPER AT:

Sid will be appearing at **Neatishead Village Hall** on Friday 10 September, and with Keith Skipper on **Cromer Pier** on Saturday 13 November.

## OH TO BE IN NORFOLK

**From ‘Home Thoughts From Oulton Broad’  
by Robert Drowning**

Oh, to be in Norfolk, now that April’s bare;  
And May unveils her darling buds, ’til June bursts  
out all over.

Oh to loiter in leafy lanes,  
Where the chiff-chaff chaffs and chiffs, and the  
nuthatch nestles on its nuts.

Oh to tiptoe through the tulips,  
Where the green woods laugh aloud,  
Far away from the bustle and the bright city  
lights.

Oh to walk on the wild side,  
With the mad March hare and the crazy frog,  
Left alone, with the right to roam.

Oh to float on low, o’er dales and dales,  
And all at once to be secure in the land of lost  
incontinent.

Oh, to walk where those feet walked in ancient  
time,  
In Norfolk’s peasants’ pastures green,  
With my hoe of burning gold, and marrows of  
desire.

Oh, and then to take my rest, honest earned,  
And know that there is honey still for tea,  
And all is well with the weird.

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*Cromer Pier as seen on a postcard date-stamped 1911. The sender, a lady from Dorset, had this to say: “What a pretty place and the locals have such a charming accent!”*

EDITOR’S COLLECTION



# I're bin in horspital

TINA CHAMBERLAIN



WELL, HERE WE are agin. Best time a the year int ut? Spring. Ma daffadils are up in the garden n everything is a bloomun... apart from me – ya see I're hed a little spell in horspital. Nuthun serious an um orite now but I tell ya that I wuz looked

arter like a Queen. Them little ow nusses they're wuth their weart in gold.

Thut wuz a rum ow dew cos I went in inna hurry, an they put wanna their nighties on me. Well I dint know how thut went on, n thut wont till arter I'd treapsed to the little room n back that the Nuss she say ta me, "Would you like me to do up the back of your gown, Mrs Chamberlain?"

"Do ut up?" I say, "whud ya mean do ut up? Are you a tryun ta tell me I're now walked the length a the ward wi ma back half a hangun outa ma nighty?"

Blimey, she laughed! Thut wuz a rum ow job, enough ta frighten the life outa them others.

I met some nice people in the next beds. Thus amazon how ya tell people ya life story in horspital int ut. I got ta know a few a the gals an we used ta mardle about our famlys an when they come ta visit them I felt right at hoom.

Evry mornun I hed porridge, an I got used to ut. My friend she hev eight prunes wi har porridge an she reckon thut keep har a gorn till dinner time – well I arnt surprised!

The rest a the food wuz orite an all, I hed mince n onions wi tearters on the top what they called Cottage Pie, I hed a vegetable stew what they called a Rissoto, and a bearked tearter wi cheese (thut wuz proper thut wuz). Orl nice n hot n served on a little plearte (not like we hev at hoom).

Boy Dervud he come up ta visit n mearke sure I hint escearped every day, an I asked him ta bring me some bits from home like ya do. Well he brought me this here bag a stuff an he'd found the biggest pairs a undies he could find. Well, bor, if I'd a hung them outa thut horspital winda, them planes woulda thought thut wuz Norwich Airport. Blimey, I laughed! Thus typical a blooks int ut. Never mind, bless his ow heart he done his best, an I're gotta say, I wuz moost upset thut he coped wi out me. When I got hoom 3½ days learter the house looked orite; he'd hoovered, washed ma clothes, done everything thut I woulda done, I say ta him thankya boy now I know you can do thut like thut don't you be afreard ta help me agin – an he do!

Well I better be a gorn now cos I're gotta git up fa work in the mornun an thus now huppast nine.

See ya orl soon.

TINA AN BOY DERVUD XXX



## Memories of a Lady's Maid

A MEMBER OF FOND since its foundation, **Vera Youngman** was recently featured in *Choice* magazine, which took a nostalgic look at her life as a lady's maid to Miss Lavinia Leslie of Stragglethorpe Hall in Lincolnshire.

At the time, aged just seventeen, Vera had never been away from her beloved Norfolk before, let alone any experience of working in service.

An enchanting story and one we hope Vera will agree to share with us in a future edition of *The Merry Mawkin*. – EDITOR



# A wedding in the family

SIDNEY GRAPES



DEER SAR – We ha’ hed a weddin’ at ours. Granfar’s grandorter got married this week, an Aunt Agatha sed to searve the expense o’ hirin’ a room, they could hev it at ours. We’d dun our spring cleanin’, so that was

orlrite. Aunt Agatha cleared out our front room, took orl the likenesses orf the sideboard an the mantelpiece (as well as har two china dorgs). She took the auntermakassers orf her chairs, an’ put away anything wot the kids mite muck about. Granfar lent a hand.

The weddin’ party hed a car to go to church in, wi’ white ribbands on; orl us others walked. They dint hev the car to cum back, acos that was hired for a funeral (afore the weddin’ was over) so we all walked back wi’ the bride an’ bridegroom in front. We cum a different way back so as we shunt meet the funeral. That was a ‘white’ weddin’ really, becous that sned a cummin back.

Wen we got home we had a rare good feed; there was sossage rolls, beef patties, mince pies

an’ jellies, an’ a special trifle. My Aunt Agatha she’d put suffin inter that wot hed got a kick in it. Aunt Agatha hed har best tea sarvice out (wot she only use for weddin’s an’ funerals) an’ wot only she wash up. Old Mrs W— lent a hand in the kitchen (Aunt Agatha paid har for that), but she kep’ a putten harsel forrid an’ cummin tru inter our front room, just as if she was a guest.

She started a pourin’ the port wine inter the glarses, in the kitchen. Granfar he twigged there was suffin wot wornt rite. He say to Aunt Agatha: “Bring yow them bottles o’ port inter the front room an’ yow pour them out; them glarses arnt above harf full wen they cum in here, and every time old Mrs W— poke har fearce roun’ the kitchen door that git redder than ever.”

We hed a good oul sing song arterwards. Our Wicar an’ his wife cum in learter on, so the neybor’s couldn’t say that that wornt a respectable du. They sung a duet wot meard us larf about ‘A Hole in the Bucket’. Granfar sung his ‘Tom Bowlen’ (thas the only one he know). The bridegroom was a gorne to sing ‘A boy’s best friend is his mother’. Granfar told him that wunt do, not there. Well everyone hed a rare good time, especially the children (tree on ’em were sick).

Wen Aunt Agatha went inter the kitchen to see how Mrs W— was a getting on wi’ the warshen up, well, bor, that was only about harf dun, an’ she set on a stule with har hid up agin the copper. She was farst asleep. Aunt Agatha said she must be werry tired. Granfar hed a look.

He say: “I ha weighed har up. I know was a matter wi’ har, she’ll weark up afore she go home.”

Well fare yer well agin together.

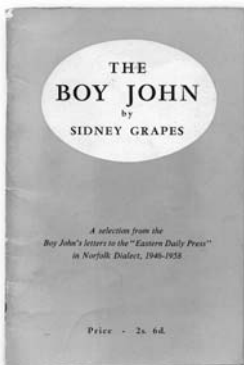
THE BOY JOHN

1 May 1950

PS: Aunt Agatha, she say, “Wen yow weigh up people yow wantar watch not only wot they do, but also wot they dornt do.”

*From ‘The Boy John’ and reproduced by kind permission of the Eastern Daily Press.*

## THE BOY JOHN



*A series of letters sent to the newspaper by Sidney Grapes from 1946 to 1958, and published in book form by The Norfolk News Co. Ltd, Norwich. Originally sold for 2/6 – I paid £2.95 for mine!*

EDITOR