

Hughie Smith — a star stunt man of the '50s

THE 'INFORMER' page of the June Free Press carried a picture of a city centre busker who you were anxious to trace. Well, I can't tell his present whereabouts but I'll tell you who he is.

His name is Hughie Smith and he was a widely known street entertainer in the post-war years (even as late as the mid-fifties) around Liverpool and Manchester.

His pitches were the Pier Head, waste ground by the Majestic cinema in London Road (now demolished) and opposite the Adelphi on the site of the Army and Navy Stores.

He did indeed escape from a canvas sack tied with ropes and chains, but this was only part of his act. He was a natural 'patter man' and later used an assistant for the bag escape while Hughie entertained the crowd with his commentaries and humour.

Another stunt was allowing anyone from the crowd to smash a paving stone on his chest with a sledgehammer. To drum up a crowd he would crack a long bull whip and pretend to swallow a huge cutlass.

As youngsters we always said he resembled Gilbert Roland, the

veteran film star. He was muscular but slim, had dark wavy hair and a pencil moustache and wore thick leather wrist straps.

He was a very well known character and it's my bet that many people who knew him at the time would not recognise him today. He gave a lot of pleasure to a lot of people, he was a natural wit and comic and it's a pity to see him so knocked about. If you find him buy him a drink and give him a few bob and get his story — it should be very, very good. Yours sincerely — JIM MORAN, 29 Lulworth Road, Lee Park, Liverpool 25.



Hughie Smith — natural comic

Renewed support for Mr. Holland

AS YOU HAVE mentioned Mr E.W. Holland in your June issue readers' letters, would you kindly allow me through your readers' column, to add the following points in this case.

It is one of the most bizarre cases I have ever heard of and the number of sworn statements which have been gathered over the years from witnesses who came forward after the trial is really amazing.

There is now enough evidence to apply to the Home Office for either a re-trial or an independent investigation to be set up and I understand that this is now under discussion between the Home Office and Mr Holland's solicitor.

In my opinion, he will now be cleared and, as I have always known him to be innocent, such action is ten years overdue.

At his trial, the Prosecution claimed me as a witness, although I had nothing to say that could be other than in Mr Holland's favour. The same thing happened to all other witnesses except Mr King who accused him. Presumably this was done to deny these witnesses to the Defence.

Mr Sam Davies, the man with the black patch, was with me in the witnesses' waiting room. He was to give evidence that the three companies formed by Holland & Co. to operate petrol stations were his and not Mr Holland's, as was wrongly stated by the police. This was the only so-called corroboration that Mr Holland could have asked Mr King for a bribe. It wasn't really corroboration at all but, without it, the Prosecution were left with nothing but Mr King's accusation that Mr Holland had asked him for £9,000 two years earlier in the privacy of his own private offices without witnesses after meeting him for about ten minutes for the first time in his life.

Mr Sam Davies asked me if I would like a coffee from the vending machine. He went off to get it for me but didn't return for some time. When he finally did so, it was with the information that he had unfortunately wandered into the court room and had been told that he could not now go into the witness box to give that vital evidence.

It has always puzzled me as to why no appeal was ever granted to Mr Holland but such was the case; so that vital disproving of the so-called corroboration was never stated in any court by Mr Sam Davies and I understand he left the country shortly after Mr Holland's conviction. Yours sincerely, "JUSTICE"

[Name and address supplied]

Any special treatment?

THE NATIONAL Union of Public Employees is conducting an enquiry on private medicine and the union is anxious to ascertain whether patients who see a consultant and pay a fee are able to advance their place on the waiting list and obtain an early admission to National Health Service facilities.

If any of your readers have experience of this, I should be glad if they would send information to me at the following address: National Union of Public Employees, 222 Stamford Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancs. Yours faithfully — COLIN M. BARNETT, Divisional Officer, National Union of Public Employees.

Rex Makin versus the Free Press

I HAVE been interested to note the hypocritical way in which you have dealt with the matter of my complaint. You have published my letter and your reply, for what it is worth, without publishing my rejoinder, which you have ignored, despite my letters to you of the 5th and 18th ult.

This obviously shows your malices and your maliciousness. If you intended to treat the matter honestly and fairly, why did you not reply to my correspondence, and why did you fail to publish my reply to your letter?

This, coupled with the snide report on page 1, makes it perfectly clear that you are, despite your protestations, a muck-raker, for purposes which are best known to yourself.

I now propose to instruct Solicitors, but, before I do so, I am giving you the opportunity of replying.

I take the strongest possible view of your general behaviour. You have set yourselves up as the arbiters of justice, morality and righteousness. Your performance, so far as I am concerned, does not justify your self-beatitude.

Despite the fact that my earlier letter to you was not intended for publication, you have published it. This letter may be published by you if you so desire. Yours truly — E. REX MAKIN, 18 Hackins Hey, Dale Street, Liverpool L2 2JT. P.S. What is your address?

● The letters which Mr Makin refers to are as follows:

5 MAY: In Reply to your letter of the 4th May, perhaps you would be so good as to let me know your address, and the addresses of the other members of your Editorial Board, or those who accept responsibility for Liverpool Free Press.

I have read carefully through your letter of 4th May, and no-

where can I find any justification for your writing what appears to me still to be a slanted report, weighted with innuendo of a most unpleasant nature. Perhaps you would be so good as to explain to me precisely what you intended to tell your readers. I do not really understand why I was introduced into this matter at all. Nowhere in your long letter do you justify this.

You may not be aware of the law on defamation, but it is not what you state but what other people think you state that is important, and the innuendos are clear, and as a result of communications made to me, your object in smearing me has succeeded.

I now await for you to tell me precisely what it is you wanted to tell your readers, why you had to drag me into the muck-raking campaign against Roderick, and why I had to be mentioned at all. So far as I am concerned, and everyone else is concerned, your innuendos were clear and unmistakable, and your letter does nothing to mitigate the position, but only aggravates it.

Yours truly — E. REX MAKIN.

18 MAY: May we please have your immediate reply to our letter of the 5th instant. Yours truly — E. REX MAKIN.

Open door

OPEN MIND is losing quite a few people at the moment just when we're approaching one of our financial crunches. We need people to:

1. Join the printshop. This requires a full-time commitment for at least six months. We aim to provide a design and screen printing service mainly for left/community and pressure groups.
2. Join and more or less take over Open Ear information service.
3. Form a group to open up the ground floor as a coffee bar/meeting place. A lot of physical work remains to be done but the basis is there.

Needless to say there is no money involved in the early stages, but if that doesn't worry you, get in touch. — RICK WALKER, Open Mind, 39/41 Manestys Lane, Liverpool 1. Tel: 709 0264/708 7174.

Objection from a distressed client

I HAVE been consulted by Mr Paul Jones, whose attention has been drawn to the article on page 12 of your issue of this month [June].

In the major article on that page headed "How they creamed off the cash to the Isle of Man", you state that "two derelict houses", numbers 12/14 Sandringham Drive, were eventually sold to H. King & Co., having been previously owned by my Client.

For the purpose of the record, the relevant paragraph in the article is "Until the early 1970s the houses were owned by slum landlord Paul Jones. Jones sold the property when he had to leave Liverpool for a short stay elsewhere".

The facts of the matter are that my Client purchased both properties in 1963/4.

The Melly house was then occupied by Mrs T. Melly and her family, and 12 Sandringham Drive, which was a purpose built block of flats, was occupied by Tenants.

My Client then let both properties off to mostly students, as the flats became vacant, having renovated and dealt with 14 Sandringham Drive in compliance with the necessary Corporation consent in respect thereof. He eventually decided in 1972 to dispose of his interest therein.

They were then sold with part vacant possession, and the Contract contained a Special Condition that the properties were sold subject to the existing tenancies and occupations thereof. Neither property was then in any way derelict.

So far as I am aware, and there would appear to be no doubt about the position, the transaction was at arms length.

I have acted for and known my Client for a considerable time.

So far as I am aware, he has never been a slum landlord in any sense whatsoever.

He did not sell the property when he had to leave Liverpool for a short stay elsewhere, nor did he in fact leave Liverpool for any such short stay, except in normal circumstances.

The reference to my Client is accordingly libellous in the extreme and has caused him much aggravation and concern, being clearly untrue.

The tone of the article indicates that all the personalities referred to by you are men of financial disrepute. My Client strongly objects to being placed in their company, as, so far as I am aware, he has never had any other dealings or association with any of the other parties referred to in your article.

I am accordingly instructed to request you to publish an immediate full and complete withdrawal and apology, in terms to be approved by me on my Client's behalf, in as

prominent a position as the article complained of, and to give me your written assurance and undertaking that you will not further publish this or any similar article concerning my Client, to pay my Client a proper and suitable sum as damages for the injury to his reputation and for the embarrassment and distress caused to him, and to indemnify him in respect of the costs which he will have incurred in this matter.

I must ask you to let me have a reply hereto without delay, and in the meantime, it must be clearly understood that my Client reserves all his rights in the matter. Yours faithfully, — G. GERALD STRONG, L.L.B., Solicitor, Commissioner for Oaths, State Insurance Buildings, 14 Dale Street, Liverpool L2 4TN.

Unfair tickets

WHEN I PROTESTED to the MPTE at the injustice of the proposal to raise the cost of a Traveller Ticket from £10.50 to £12.50, i.e. an increase of 19.04% to allow for a fare increase of about 10% over a very small part of the system (the suburban railways) the secretary of the MPTE denied that my facts were correct and said that the proposal was for a flat rate increase on all Traveller Tickets of 15%.

It is now a matter of history that there has been a very unjust differential rate of increase on the various types of tickets, ensuring that those living in the inner areas will subsidise those more fortunate to live in St Helens and Southport; that the £10.50 ticket did in fact rise by 19.04%; that the average, not flat rate, rise was — according to the North West Traffic Commissioners, more than 15%.

It is most disturbing that a public body such as the MPTE should give such misleading information. Surely the public has a right to know what is being done in its name. Yours faithfully — S. ALASDAIR MUNRO, 727 Queens Drive, Liverpool, L13 4BS.

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