

(From the official Trunch Trumpet, 31.7.2000)

Henry, alleged father of folk mego-star Sid Kipper and erstwhile member of the Kipper Family, departed this earth on July 29th. After a long and painful existence, not least for his family, he passed away peacefully in mid anecdote. So in a very real sense he went quietly in everyone else's sleep. Now we shall never know just what it was he said to Cedric Cockle about his artichokes at the Trunch Pig and Produce Show in 1947.

Henry Kipper, younger son of William and Sarah, was born on the day World War I broke out. His father noted in his diary at the time "This is the end of civilisation as we know it". Strangely, though, he made no mention of the War.

Henry grew up in the little Norfolk village of St Just-near-Trunch, where in 1936 he married Dot Spratt to the great relief of all, as it meant nobody else would have to marry either of them. During World War II he held the reserved occupation of Scrap Dealer, and from then on did whatever work came his way that he couldn't avoid.

In the 1980s, however, along with his talented son Sid, he was discovered by the folk scene, and for a few years they had a sensational career touring the country, recording albums and appearing on TV and radio.

Then, in 1991, the family held a surprise retirement party for Henry, leaving Sid to conquer new worlds as a solo performer, story teller, radio presenter and singer. His father would surely have been proud of him. Well – jealous, at least.

For the past few years Henry's whereabouts have been a complete mystery. He ran away from the Old Folkies Home to which he had been retired, and the family lost touch with him. Then, just two weeks before his death, he turned up out of the blue at the family cottage, and despite the change of locks managed to gain entrance. There they found him, sitting in his old chair by the fire as if nothing had happened. Where he had been is still a mystery, but there may be a clue in the fact that a number of widows from all over England attended his funeral

The service was conducted by the vicar of St Just, Rev 'Call-Me-Derek' Bream. It was a colourful affair, even before the widows came to blows with each other. Derek performed a rather modern form of service, which included the coffin being placed in the cloakroom according to the laws of feng shui, and the congregation standing and clapping their hands over their heads as they movingly sang 'Another One Bites

The Dust’.

Tributes to Henry have been flooding in – not least from the various widows who attended his funeral. A spokesperson for the Erpingham Folk Song and Dance Society said “As a singer his refusal to be tied down to the well-tempered scale was challenging”. Cromer’s Folk on the Pier opined “We will never see his like again, but rest assured that if we do we’ll run them out of town”.

Henry leaves a widow, Dot, a brother, George, and a son, Sid. A spokesman for the latter said “Sid Kipper is alive and well, and laughing his head off!”

Chris Sugden