

In December 1991 The Kipper Family gave their last performances at the end of a lengthy farewell tour, before Sid went on to find fame and fortune as a solo artist. In 2011 an album of previously unrecorded Kipper Family songs will be released, culled from various old recordings, and called 'Two-Faced'. The songs will be framed by part of the script reproduced here.

This, however, is the script which as it started that tour. Kipperologists may find some interest, in due course, in comparing this with the version on the album, which is how it completed the tour. For now, however, over to Sid and Henry .....

(applause)

Henry Thank you very much. Now this next song .....

Sid Hold you hard, father , there's something I want to say. You thought you'd come along here to sing your boring old songs to these people, and tell them all about life in the old days. But that just shows how much you know. For tonight, Henry Kipper, That Was Your Life, That Was.

Henry So that's why Dot insisted I put on clean underwear before I came out!

Sid Does it surprise you?

Henry It does - normally she doesn't bother until I go home.

Sid Henry Kipper, you were born on the day world war eye broke out.

Henry What?

Sid That's what the vicar wrote.

Henry (Has a look) World War One!

Sid That look like an I to me."

Henry Well - that's not; that's a capital 'one'.

Sid Oh alright - you were born on the day World War One broke out. Your father wrote in his diary: 'One weep for mankind.'

Henry I weep for mankind.

Sid That looks like a capital one to me.

Henry You're just displaying your own ignorance. Get on with it.

Sid 'This is the end of civilisation as we know it'. Strangely, though, he didn't mention the war

Your parents were poor but they were honest, weren't they?"

Henry Yes, they were.

Sid And you were brought up to be poor but honest too, weren't you ?

Henry Yes, I was.

Sid But telling the truth is not always easy, and at the age of five you got into trouble with Mrs Dace, didn't you?

Henry Yes, I did.

Sid Would you like to tell us about it?

Henry No, I wouldn't.

Sid Well it says here that you've got to tell an interesting antidote.

Henry Well alright then. That wasn't telling the truth that was hard - it was putting up with the consequences. I went to the corner shop to get something for mother, but when I got there I couldn't remember what it was she wanted. So Mrs Dace said to me; "Don't worry Henry - what was the last thing your mummy said to you". So I said "Well, that's easy; she said 'Don't let that two-faced old cow short-change you again, Henry'."

Sid Very soon you had a younger brother, didn't you?

Henry That's right, that was George. Is he coming on?

Sid George would have liked to be here on your special night, but he's very tied up at the moment - well, he's very locked up at the moment.

You and George went to Trunch Bored School, where you were taught by Miss Pickerel.

Henry That's right.

Sid You last saw Miss Pickerel in 1935, when she left Trunch to look after the children of an Austrian nobleman, Baron Von Crapp. You've never seen her since, and we've got no idea where she is today.  
Tell us a bit about your schooldays.

Henry Well, alright. Now I never learnt a lot at school. I was away the day they done reading. Come to think of it I was away the days they done writing and arithmetic as well, and they was the three most important subjects - the R, the W and the A. But we done a lot of other letters besides them three. We done RI, and HE, and PT. That last one. was my favourite. The boys played football and the girls played netball. 'Course the boys always won, by kicking the ball out of the girls' hands.

Sid You left school, with a certificate in needlework, but it wasn't yours, and you had to take it back. That night in the Old Goat Inn you underwent an initiation into the secrets of manhood.

Henry That's right, that was very symbolic. That was a sort of a passing out ceremony. I don't remember much about it, but they do reckon that I passed out after less pints than anyone else ever did, so that's something to be proud of, isn't it? All I can recall is that one minute someone said 'That's your turn to stand a round, Henry', and the next I woke up in a ditch. Still, I never was much of a one for standing, around.

Sid You can say that again! As you got older you became interested in natural history. You spent many a long night in the fields and woods, studying the habits of creatures such as rabbit, duck, pheasant and the like. You even took specimens home for further research. But you never took specimens outside the poaching season, did you?"

Henry Well of course I din't - that weren't done. Not like nowadays. Any thing's done nowadays. In them days you knew what was what. You knew who was who as well. And where was where. You even knew who was where, and what for. Nowadays you don't even know when is why. In them days poaching out of season .just weren't done. And as that weren't done then of course I didn't do it.

Sid In 1937 you met Agnes Spratt at the North Walsham Agricultural and Gang

Show. Immediately you decided to change her name - to Dot.

Henry That's right. I'd just won this prize tankard as a matter of fact - that's engraved here look: 'Henry Kipper - Biggest Pig At Show'. Anyhow, I bumped into this girl and we fell hell over heels in a pile of horse muck. I pulled her out and we decided to get married there and then. But on second thoughts that didn't seem right to get married in a pile of horse muck, so we put it off till later. As a matter of fact that took a while, because we was banned from the church three weeks in a row. But finally they let us in, and that come to the hard bit where you have to remember all your names, and that turned out she was called Agnes. So I said 'I'll call you Dot for short then, if you don't mind'. And she said 'I do', and that was that.

Sid Before many months had passed Dot was blessed by a confinement, wasn't she?

Henry No, you've got that wrong. I was blessed by a confinement. Dot got off with probation.

Sid Your first and only child, Sidney Kipper, was born on the day World War..... eleven broke out.

Henry Who's this Sidney bloke?

Sid It's me - Sidney is long for Sid.

Henry Oh, is it? Oh yes, I remember now. We called you Sidney after Sidney Starlight, who everyone was talking about at that time. He was the gelding what won the Trunch Derby that year.

Sid You once said that the day Sidney was born was the best day of your life.

Henry That was. I had the house to myself, what with Dot being away at her mother's. But nothing last, do it? The next day was the worst of my life, 'cause she brought you home and my peace was all shattered. I couldn't get no peace at home.

Sid About this time you found that your singing got you out of the house, didn't, you?

Henry Well yes - because Dot used to throw me out of the house every time I

started to slug. So I used to go down the Old Goat and sing there. That used to keep our spirits up, during the dark days of the war – that and Ernie’s home brewed cabbage and acorn brandy.

Sid You were never called up during the war, although you were called a lot of other things. You held the reserved occupation of ‘scraper’.

Henry Scrapper. That was me and George, actually. We used to go around collecting old scrap to help keep the war going – things like old pots and kettles and railings and the lead off the church roof – that sort of thing. Of course when the war come to an end – despite all our efforts to keep it going – there was no demand far scrapping.

Sid So the end of the war found you unemployed, and you spent the next forty years looking for work. According to some people you looked for work all over the place, and whenever you found it you rushed off in the opposite direction!

Henry Never mind ‘some people’ – I know who that was. That was Cyril Cockle what said that, and he don’t know what he’s talking about. He’s two rods short of chain.

Sid Well tell us what really happened, then.

Henry Well in them days if you wanted to work you had to work for the Silver-Darlings. So I went up to see Doyley Silver-Darling at the big hall and I asked him for a job. I remember he looked me up and down very serious. Then he looked me side to side and back to front, and he said “Henry Kipper, you’re the last person I want to employ”. Well, I was flattered. I thought ‘Fair enough, that’s a firm offer then’, and I waited till he was ready to employ his last person. I waited and waited, holding myself in readiness, until finally, in 1964, I heard that he was lying on his death bed. So I went up the big hall and told Herring, the butler, that his Lordship would want to see me. “Young Kipper”, he say, “You’re the last person he’d want to see”. “That’s right”, I say; “Is it time yet?” I was eager to find out what sort of job I’d got, you see, after waiting all them years. “It’s too late”, say Herring, “He passed off ten minutes ago”. “Oh”, I say, “Did he say anything about a job?” “Well”, say Herring; “His famous last words was ‘Bugger Yarmouth’ – perhaps that was the job he had in mind, if you’d care to take it on”. I thought about it, but I decided that couldn’t be done. I mean, Yarmouth’s been bugged for years!

Sid So that brings us almost up to the. end of your life. And at this point we have a

special, treat for you. George Kipper has written a special song to try to bring your life to life. And as he couldn't get away himself, I'm going to sing it for you now.

Henry Well, that'll be a real treat!

Sid sings: Mrs Dace, Mrs Dace, is it true what mummy says that you're two-faced?  
Ow, ow, ow, ow, ow!

Ever since I was young boy I've eaten silver balls,  
And marzipan and icing - I must have ate them all -  
But even better eating are all creatures great and small;  
And whenever I can get it I like one thing best of all;  
It's a pin-tail duck, it's got to be faced,  
A pin-tail duck has such a subtle taste.

Are you sending me away with no word of farewell,  
Will there be no appeal - I'm a goner -  
I should have been more careful, didn't mean to be caught out,  
You know that was the last thing on my mind, your honour.

"Get out of the house" Mrs Kipper announced, "If you're gonna do all that wailing:  
I'm not listening to all them old songs about shearing and nutting and sailing.  
He knew from the start, deep down in his heart  
That Dot thought he was a boring old fart;  
But she said "Never mind, you're part is to do what you're told".

There's a public house in St Just-near-Trunch, they call the Old Goat Inn,  
And it's been the ruin of one old boy - my God, I know, it's him!

Sid But in 1984 everything changed for you. While you and I were on holiday in the Devon resort of Sidsmouth we discovered a folk festival, and the folk festival discovered us, didn't they?

Henry That's right. We went into this pub for a quiet drink and all this singing started. Terrible that was - completely spoiled the ambulence of the place. And what's more they were singing all our old songs all wrong. So I told them, and they said alright, if you're so clever you do one. So I did, and they couldn't believe their ears.

Sid Then I did one.

Henry Yes, and they couldn't believe your ears either. Then we did one together, and before you could say Jack Russell we was megostars, and we was besieged by offers of people wanting us to go and sing at other folk festivals.

Sid So in 1985 you became a professional singer, and for six years you've toured all over the country, singing your songs and telling your tales to all who wanted to hear - and many more beside.

And that is the story of how you, Henry Kipper, came to be where you are today.

Henry Norwich.

Sid And now, in the twilight of your days, you are about to retire and hand over the business to a younger, fitter, better looking man. Your return to St. Just-near-Trunch will bring sadness to the whole village.

If necessary fill a bit in here if the old boy has finally pegged it. Oh - I don't think that's part of it. So in confusion let me just say Henry Kipper, That Was Your Life, That Was.

Henry Thank you.

(supplied to us by Chris Sugden)