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Words and music of 36 of Sid's songs with commentaries by Sid. Plus a 13 page biography, photographs, 4 stories, a play, a dance, a walnut-shell workshop, instructions for the singing of folk songs, and more!

Published by the Mousehold Press
ISBN no 1 874739 06 4

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SAMPLE

In which we meet our hero, hear of his doings, and persuade him to put them away

2 - The Golden Buoy

When Sid left school in 1960 he was apprenticed to his uncle, George Kipper. The exact nature of George's business is not clear, but it seems to have involved such traditional crafts as 'dealing', 'flogging', and 'following lorries waiting for things to drop off the back'.

"I come under the influence with Uncle George, when he was back in the village after a spell away, pleasing Her Majesty. He's a lovely singer is George - much better than my old father. It's a shame he has to help the police so much with their enquiries, or he could be famous without the 'in'. George taught me all I knew at the time. Mind you, that weren't a lot. I mean, George knew a lot, but he always used to say 'If I told you all I knew then you'd know as much as I do, plus anything you might have picked up for yourself, and then I'd have to be your apprentice, so you'll just have to find things out the hard way like I did, young fellow-me-lad.' He always used to say that. Unless you offered to buy him a drink, of course, and then he said 'A pint of the usual'."

But, as much of George's business seemed to revolve around pubs, and in particular the Old Goat Inn in Trunch, Sid had lots of opportunities to hear his Uncle sing, and with his keen ear he rapidly learned all that George knew about that. As an apprentice he was not allowed to sing in the pub himself – singing was considered to be man's work, and until a Truncheon had gone through the strange ritual which took place on his twenty-first birthday he was expected to keep quiet and buy the beer.

Kid's nowadays have it soft. At that time of the day they used to say 'One boy is worth half a man, two boys is worth half a boy, and three boys aren't worth nothing at all'. But they couldn't stop me singing in the privy of my own house, although they wished they could when they wanted to go in there for a sing themselves."

In 1964, at the age of 18, Sid began his National Service. This was a very difficult thing for him to do, not least because National Service had been abolished some years earlier! But Sid has never been one to shun a problem, and he managed to get the Mundesley Dark Infantry to take him on for a year.

"I got fed up with people going on about how the army made them what they were. I mean, looking at some of them, you'd think they ought to go and ask for their money back. Howsomever, I thought I'd like to give it a go. I thought wrong as a matter of fact, because I hated every minute of it. Well, I tell a lie – I didn't hate every minute. I hated every minute except for about twenty minutes in September, with the Colonel's daughter. I quite enjoyed those minutes."

Actually Sid and the army got on surprisingly well, in fact. He has always been a smart dresser, so the uniform was no trouble to him.

"I was always one for dressing smart and up to the minute. I mean, I was the first person in Trunch to wear drain-pipe trousers – that would have been in about 1964, as far as I recall. Then again, they all laughed when I moved on to flares in 1978. I'm a bit of trend settler, as a matter of fact. Of course that's where a lot of these modern folk singers get it wrong. You see, I was brought up to dress in my best for the singing – it's a mark of respect. But these new people, a lot of them don't even wear a tie! It's all Arran sweaters, which are only correct for singing Scottish songs. It's a shame, 'cos some of them aren't bad singers. It's just the clothes that let them down."

He was also very good at soldierly activities like creeping about at night with a gun

and shooting things. Square bashing took him some time to come to terms with, but once he had worked out that it was really just a flat footed sort of morris dance he quickly got the hang of it. Consequently he marched with bells on his ankles, but no-one could find a regulation that actually banned it, and the years of training under his Uncle George had made him an excellent barrack room lawyer, so they couldn't stop him.

"Every now and again I got leave, so I kept in touch with what was going on in the village. There was a new vicar, who we've still got, except, of course, he's an old vicar now. That was Rev 'Call-me-Derek' Bream. We didn't get on too well at first. He was having Hops in the village hall, and that sort of thing. I never went - I was too busy having hops in the Old Goat Inn. But over the years he's made quite a difference to our village. Well, either that or it's got different of its own accord, and he just happened to be there."

Derek (known to some as Dingley Del) has been an important influence on Sid's career. His songwriting, in particular, brought other sorts of music to Sid's attention, and over the years Sid has sung a few of Derek's songs himself.

"Well, sometimes I get bored with the old songs and fancy something a bit more groovy and up to date. More often, though, it's the audience who get bored, and need waking up. That's when I give them one of Del's numbers. By the end of one of them they're begging me to go back to the old songs again."

REVIEWS

"A wonderful read for anyone with a sense of humour who naturally enjoys a good laugh"

(Tykes News)

"The titles alone are enough to raise a smile - the ideal purchase for anyone with a sense of humour and a love of tradition"

(Folk Roots)