

Cock & Bull

Volume 1, Emission 1

Edited by: Clayton Moore

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WELCOME TO THE FIRST COCK & BULL NEWS

Hello Each,

My little Clayton is a good lad really, although I still don't think he airs his underwear properly, and how many times can you tell him, eh? After all, he's been 39 for long enough to know better, just like Jack Benny, and he can't play the violin either. He's asked me to write a few words introducing you to his latest daft idea; so I have.

Clayton's Granny, her mark: X

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT THEN?

Thanks, Gran. Well, the idea is to have a Cock & Bull Society with its own website, probably complemented by a printed magazine for those who can't balance a laptop on their knees whilst sitting on the doughnut in granny's greenhouse. There will be regular contributors to the site, and we hope YOU will want to add to it, too. Look out for news of events, as well.

BUT WHY 'COCK & BULL'? You may well arsk.

For those of you who don't know: the origins of the expression 'A Cock & Bull Story' are rooted in the little town of Stony Stratford, now 'The Jewel in the Crown' of Milton Keynes. Stony, as the locals refer to it, indicating that all the other Stratfords are mere also-rans, incidentally, has eight pubs, one of which is The Crown, so that must be 'The Crown in the Jewel of the Crown' of Milton Keynes, I suppose.

Stony owes its fame to two things: the first is that so many events MIGHT have happened here, and the other is that the town developed on the old Watling Street Roman Road, making it a natural staging place for coaches.

Records show that at least 56 buildings in Stony were ale-houses, pubs, or coaching inns (not simultaneously, of course), and the two "biggies" were ... you've guessed ... The Bull and The Cock, but not necessarily in that order, as any fule know.

A traveller's tale (see Roget under the heading of 'boloney') in one inn would be developed in the other, passed back and further elaborated on, then back and forward, with such invention and imagination that – hey! – it was a Cock & Bull story. Sounds too good to be true. And, of course, true is what it may not be.



SO, WHY A COCK & BULL SOCIETY? AND WHO IS HE?

TURN TO PAGE 2 TO SATE YOUR CURIOSITY

WHY? Because Stony Stratford, like Mount Everest, is there, although not as lumpy. It is laughter, they say, which differentiates Mankind from the animals, although there are others who think that the difference is that animals are too intelligent to concern themselves with wars, religion, obscene wealth, and television celebrities. Ask yourself how many haddock really want to discuss their private parts in public, even though they have the equivalent intelligence and, without resorting to Botox, the appearance, to do so.

SO, a few Stony-ites have got together to share the joys of humour, and, with some assistance from the Frog Island Brewery, have come up with this lot. Graze in the following pages for a while, and see what you think. Should there be more of this? Could you do better (or at least as well)? Do you feel you could have got more out of watching a bright-orange mediocrity on television? Who was Brian really? Why are you being asked so many questions when what you really want is to know who the bloke mounted backwards on his donkey is? Speaking of which, in the Old Testament, to whom did God talk through his ass?

WILL we be exercising censorship? Answer: YES, and tough if you don't like it; equally tough if your beliefs and/or toilet-training have left you too narrow-minded to share quality humour. Always remember: **READING THIS IS NOT COMPULSORY!**

WE hope you like the Cock & Bull Society idea. If you'd like to know more, to contribute something, to attend or organise an event, help develop the website, have a pint of Croak & Stagger with us, just

EMAIL Clayton Moore, for the moment: c/o ken@jookofstony.freeserve.co.uk

JO, GO ON, THEN:
WHO IS HE?



Oh, look: he's on his donkey the right way round now.

He is the Nasreddin Hoca (the 'c' is pronounced as a 'j', by the way, but you can blame that on the Young Turks if you like). He's a popular folk hero across large parts of Asia and Eastern Europe, with each country claiming him as its own. His homespun philosophy gets him out of or into trouble and/or work, and the tales frequently have a moral such that many of his gems were adopted by Sufi teachers.

Want to hear a Hoca joke?

After the Hoca got a special recipe for liver from his friend, he bought some liver and because he liked it very much, he wanted to eat it often. But every time he asked for it, his wife said that the cat took the liver and fled. One day, the Hoca became angry and said: "Woman, I brought liver! Where is it?" Again, his wife said that the cat had eaten it and run off. The Hoca caught the cat and weighed it, then said: "That is exactly two kilos. And the liver which I brought was also two kilos. Now tell me: if that is the liver, where is my cat, and if that is the cat, then I want my liver."

See? And there's more Hoca stuff at Stony library on April 17th. Just ask them.

IVOR CUTLER

The sad news was the death of Ivor Cutler, back in 2006, at the age of 83.

The good news is that his family have set up a website, www.ivorcutler.org, and have also released his final and long-time hard-to-get album "A Flat Man" on CD on their own label. Available from www.hoorghouse.com, and full (48 tracks) of the usual mix of vignettes and songs (with harmonium accompaniment); all quirky, if not surreal. Hear what happens to his mother when her boat sinks, in the song "A Bubble or Two"!

We've had a few Ivor Cutler celebration nights in Stony over the years, the last one being a Scottish dinner with guests reading, often to their bewilderment, snippets from this 'Oblique Musical Philosopher'. Doubtless, there will be more, and you can expect a feature in Cock & Bull.

Don't forget Ivor's suggestion: "Personalise your stationery: lick the stamp and envelope."

Or his axiom "If you empty your bowels at night a shepherd will have a red face in the morning."

JULIA'S SWEAT!

You may know that 17th century poet, Robert Herrick, wrote "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may", but did you know he'd written MANY poems to "Julia" extolling pretty much every part of her including her breasts, her breath, her nipples, and her sweat! Some of these are – unintentionally? – funny. I like the couplet about her leg which runs (sorry):

"Fain would I kiss my Julia's dainty leg, Which is white and hairless as an egg." Beat that for faint praise!

For someone who was vicar for much of his long (83) life, he was a bit of a chancer, and wrote some pretty nippy epigrams on his contemporaries. One, "Gander", suffers so:

"Since Gander did his pretty youngling wed, Gander, they say, doth each night pisse a bed; What is the cause? Why, Gander will reply, No goose layes good eggs that is trodden dry."

Which only leaves the question: who wrote this mock epitaph for Lord Castlereagh? "Posterity will ne'er survey/A nobler scene than this. Here lie the bones of Castlereagh. Stop traveller, and piss."

NEW BOOKS OUT!

Exclusive reviews of new releases by our in-house, self-appointed arbiter of good taste, Homer Mom-us.

First up is: "Dogg RL" which the blurb tells us is 'the heart-warming and inspirational autobiography of a rap and hip-hop star's traumatic struggle with the sudden loss of the ability to rhyme'. Our view is that this would have been better produced on softer, more absorbent paper. (0/10).

Drusilla Chamberlye's latest is "Joey", the uplifting tale of a baby boy, abandoned in the Australian outback, and raised by a colony of budgerigars.

The story begins with Joey's capture, after many sightings of a strange creature hopping about in the bush or perching on coolibar trees, at the scene of an overturned lorry full of dried cuttlefish on the Nullabar Road.

Joey's return to "civilisation" is mapped out in warm and sympathetic language, documenting the early days of ridicule from other children because he walked around with a bell on his head, and lovingly explaining how he could only be stopped from whistling by putting a green baize cloth over him.

Our view: this has a certain charm in that purchase is not compulsory. (1/10)

MY LIFE AS A ROCK'N'ROLL SEX-GOD

NOW IT CAN BE TOLD

The story starts when I had one more hair and, as you can see, I was not only much slimmer, but far taller.

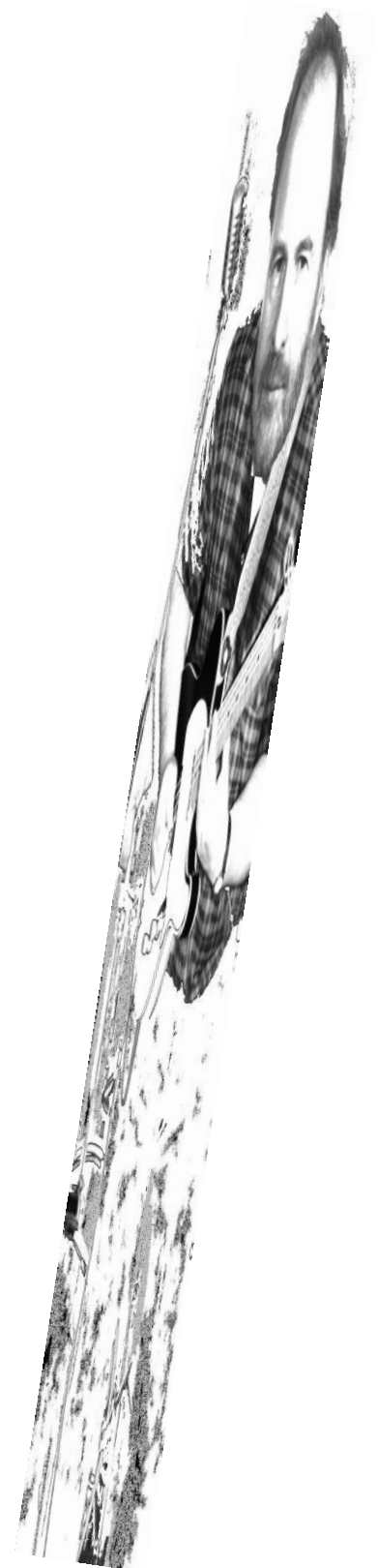
It is not a tale of overnight success – no reality television pap hype back then, and I spent NO TIME AT ALL considering the style of belly-button piercing I should have in a desperate attempt to seem different from all the others. No, I paid my dues, and it was nearly three days from the relative obscurity of hesitantly confessing that “I done woke up this morning” at Matt Armour’s Folk Workshop, then in its youthful 117th year of existence, to storming the world at my acclaimed debut with Stony’s own hard-drinking, hard-playing, hard-hitting, hard-of-hearing “Ratpack”, known and feared the length of the High Street as The Stratpack.

What a night! The crowd went crazy. Some were even clapping on the right beat. Women were screaming and swooning, some simultaneously. So much silky underwear was being thrown I thought I was under attack by The Cutty Sark. I had to throw most of it back, though, as very few items were 43-inch waist and my breathing would have been constricted. One woman was carried out shrieking “I want his babies”, and later had to have the sausage roll she was holding surgically removed from her palm. Other women performed a standing ovation.

The next months were just a whirlwind of wild music, week-long orgies of trying to recall what sex was like, and vast intakes of mind-expanding substances like Centurion’s Ghost and Croak & Stagger. The endless touring was crippling – all ends of the High Street including the middle – and crazy, crazy schedules out as far as Stoke Goldington.

Something had to give, and it was when I found I was drinking a pint of LAGER before a gig that I knew I had to get out to save my health and sanity. My musical integrity was suffering, too, and I realised the line had to be drawn when I even contemplated joining in the chorus of “My Way”.

Do I regret it? Non, je ne regrette rien, as Piaf once brayed. I think of this time as vintage wine from fine old kegs, from the brim to the dregs. It was a very good third of a year.



SO WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE SHOW SO FAR?

Think it's a bit full of background and introductory stuff, eh? Well, that's because it is. Not surprising in an introductory issue, but YOUR contributions should change all that. Meanwhile, here's more:

CENSORSHIP/APPROVAL: Our editor, Clayton, is a broad-minded chap, citing the likes of François Rabelais, Salvador Dali, Botticelli's bums, Donald McGill, and Kurt Vonnegut among his favourites, alongside PG Wodehouse, Beachcomber, Ronald Searle, Lewis Carroll and Mervyn Peake. NEVERTHELESS, he knows how, and where, to draw the line, ie where he wants. If you don't like this, start your own society (listen to Ivor Cutler's tale of "The Friendless Society" for further guidance).

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By the way, it was Lord Byron who had such a jolly opinion of Lord Castlereagh.

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS FESTIVAL

September 11-14th 2008 will see a national festival led by English heritage and The Civic Trust,

The aim is for towns, organizations, individuals, to open their doors to events based on heritage and history.

Stony Stratford will, of course, be hosting its own events such as the town walk, a York House Centre open day, and various performances by the likes of the Stony Stratford Mummers. Expect some things, too, from The Cock & Bull Society. Watch out for publicity, contact Clayton Moore on (ken@jookofstony.freeserve.co.uk), or follow the events calendar on

www.stonystratford.co.uk

SEASON OF THE WHICH

Q1. Which hit song (it got into the Top 10 in 1957) starts "There's a song that I recall my mother sang to me. She sang it as she tucked me in when I was ninety three."?

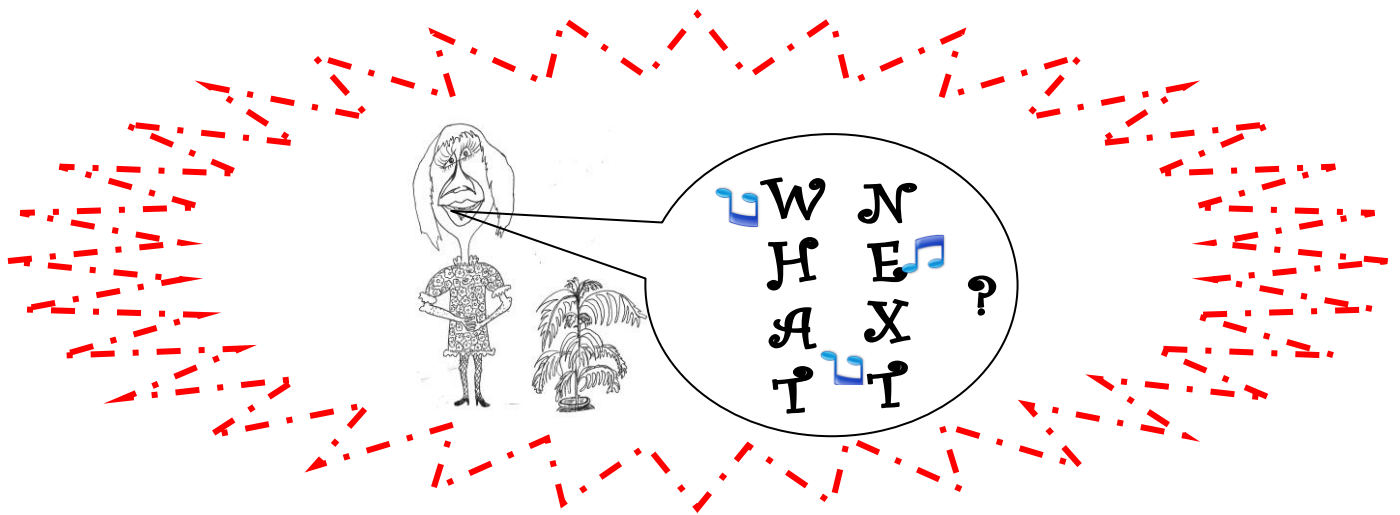
Q2. Which bodyparts did the Pobble lack?

Q3. Which author's witch, Nanny Slagg, frequently sang "The Wizard's stick has got a knob on the end?"

Q4. Which "impossible-to-film" classic book did Michael Winterbottom attempt to film in "A Cock & Bull Story" in 2005?

Q5. Which town is home to 'Triffic Films' who produced the animated satirical "2DTV" series for television? Guess!!!

ANSWERS IN THE NEXT ISSUE!



Just get those contributions coming in, preferably by email or on disc (pictures in jpeg format, please). Whether it's your own Cock & Bull story (what did YOU do when attacked by a crocodile and wolves?), a bit of verse, a drawing, a report on a fashion-show (always good for a laugh, although freak-shows are supposedly a thing of the past), a piece about someone whose work you admire and would like to share, or whatever, AS LONG AS IT'S HUMOROUS! Please, NO threnodies about your angst, and no twee stuff about your little kitten, Tiddles, playing with a ball of wool (unless Tiddles does something humorous like strangle himself to death with it).

Authorship will be acknowledged (real- OR pseudo- nym), and even a mention of emails and website links if you want. Go for it! Remember, The Cock & Bull Society may be rubbish, but at least it's BRITISH rubbish - mostly.

If you look through the preceding piffle you will see, in addition to specific mention of humorists, not-very-veiled references to the likes of Spike Milligan, Nigel Molesworth – the Curse of St Custard's, Morecambe & Wise, Beryl Reid, Edward Lear, Rudolph Raspe (WHO??), Professor Bruce Lacey (another WHO??), Monty Python, Blackadder (try finding it).... Broad-based, eh – just like Donald McGill's Blackpool landladies.

**TO SIGN UP FOR COCK & BULL, OR FOR MORE
INFORMATION ABOUT EVENTS AND IDEAS**

EMAIL

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