

## Old Mitchamian - Paddy Carpenter

Advised by English master Adrian Jackson that I should investigate a career in journalism, I worked for Mitcham firm **Scaffolding Great Britain** for ten months while applying to numerous newspaper groups and magazines. I found myself on the scaffolding of some of the highest building projects in London including the Millbank Tower and another – perhaps lower in two senses – the structure that would become the **Playboy Club**. As I was not overly keen on heights I was glad to secure a job with the production arm of **Pearl & Dean**, the screen advertising contractor, as a scriptwriter. With even greater luck, an ad I conceived within my first few weeks there, for the Triumph Herald car, went on to win prizes at the 1964 Advertising Film Festival in Venice. As a result the company attracted higher calibre TV and cinema projects, which in turn brought more successes.

I was eventually joined in my one-man Creative Department by Les Gray, a friend from Pollards Hill, who had independently persuaded my boss to give him a job. Whether or not the output of scripts was enhanced by his arrival, the arrangement was convenient as by that time I was, in my spare time, nominally manager of pop group **The Mourners** which Les fronted with his brother, Pete, and others. I was probably the worst manager in the history of pop, only appointed because I had a car large enough to transport the personnel and a few guitars, or put more accurately, Les. We ran the group, which soon changed its name to **Mud**, from our back office at *P&D*.

When the door fell off the car, involving a lengthy restoration, the group understandably sacked me, but we remained friends and I later accompanied them to help out on their first two overseas tours of Sweden and Denmark as well as many UK trips when I could. I still regularly see the surviving group members.

When **P&D Productions** was 'privatised' I joined advertising agency **Charles Hobson & Grey**, but quickly left to become freelance, and added documentaries to my repertoire, enjoying a long collaboration with director Barry Hinchliffe and editor/director Brian Llewellyn at **United Motion Pictures** to produce a series of sports films, many of a motorsport nature. More prizes followed, including one for the ground-breaking **From Harrogate it Started** (much watched on U-Tube) about the RAC International Rally of 1971, where we were able to use music by **The Who** as the group owned a car in the event. Annoyingly, I didn't get credited on the copies; presumably they forgot as there was no formal commentary. The concept was to use just the music, natural

sounds and snatches of conversations, plus some "BBC news bulletins" which I scripted.

In parallel I had, by another stroke of fortune, found myself covering for a friend as the second assistant director on a fortnight of car commercials and this precipitated a major change of direction. A national shortage of film personnel saw me recruited to the team of ADs on the Wiltshire location of the Hollywood musical **Doctor Dolittle**. 'In at the deep end' would be the appropriate description, but having got away with it, I was set on a path in film production which has lasted over 50 years and taken me to locations in 30 countries, working with artists from Omar Sharif to Elton John and from Ava Gardner to Minnie Mouse and with directors such as Tony Richardson and Martin Campbell.

Due to a distinct shortage of other volunteers, I served a term as chairman of the Assistant Directors' section of the film technicians' union, **ACTT**.

Having started in advertising films, I have spent much of my time in that branch of filmmaking, which I enjoy for the pursuit of perfection and its often experimental nature. Nevertheless, I am sometimes lured to feature films and TV series, where I appreciate the perhaps more structured professionalism. It is gratifying to have been involved with some iconic series, among them **The Avengers, Catweazle, Reilly - Ace of Spies, Robin of Sherwood, Treasure Island, Lace II** and **Minder**. I also count myself lucky to have worked on a raft of documentaries, which always grant insights into other people's lives and work, and have often taken me to far flung locations; Norwegian fjords, the Saudi Arabian desert, the Borneo jungle and Tokyo among them. Feature films have included **The Anniversary, Wuthering Heights, Joseph Andrews, The Cat and the Canary** and **Event Horizon**.

Writing mainly took a back seat over the years as the long hours and physical demands of filming preclude the achievement of too much else, but I did collaborate on a full-length feature screenplay, complete a travel book about Russia in the days of glasnost, and write an episode of **Hamish Macbeth** (a series on which I had been the initial assistant director). With other priorities leaving me no time to follow up on these projects, they never went forward, but they provided valuable experience for what was to come.

I have always been fascinated by most forms of transport and by lucky chance many of the jobs that came my way involved cars, trains, boats or aircraft. Coupled with a love of maps and an

interest in navigation it was almost inevitable that co-producing a so-called 'cinema short' about a flying circus, a real one, should finally lead to my learning to fly. This in turn led to my becoming a founding partner in a new flying club at Gloucester and thus to a part-time-full-time unpaid job as a licensee and microwave restaurateur. Other eventual results saw me joining the commentary team for the annual season of air racing under the auspices of the **Royal Aero Club** – I am now the lead commentator for the **King's Cup** among others – and in 2008, marrying a leading and uniquely successful air racer.

Having studied police history since the 1960s, twenty years ago I began to write on the subject for specialist organisations and their magazines. I contributed a chapter to **Giving the Past a Future**, an **Open University** book on the preservation of police transport artefacts.

I became fascinated by the Lockerbie Bombing and after research tried with some success to turn the incredibly complex story of the plot and its cover-up into a feature film screenplay. Not entirely satisfied I decided to rework the project into a novel about a screenwriter trying to sell exactly such a screenplay. This became **UNSAFE – The Script of One-Zero-Three**, my first novel, recently released as a major paperback and available world-wide on **Amazon**. While very much a novel, it is also effectively a reinvestigation of the actual Lockerbie evidence and the events in its aftermath, so provides answers and conclusions which will surprise many used to the official version unquestioningly offered up by an obliging press for more than a quarter-century.

With **UNSAFE** launched, I was approached to write a history of British police vehicles. What appeared was, **Police Stop! – Patrol and Response Vehicles in England and Wales** leaving the way open for further books in a series and I am currently working on **Police Stop 2 – Motorcycles**, which will be the first ever book dealing with British police motorcycling.

I continue to produce magazine articles including my **Means of Identity** series looking at the story of the 'modern' British police as reflected through the collective public image and those of individual forces. Other magazine and book projects, including a second novel also continue.

- My website is [paddycarpenter.com](http://paddycarpenter.com) and I am on Facebook and LinkedIn, all this after years of being deliberately low-profile while working on the sensitive Lockerbie project.

- There is also a Facebook page for my novel, under the name ***Unsafe by Paddy Carpenter***. (If anyone did happen to purchase a copy from Amazon, I would be grateful if they would e-mail me the date printed and unique serial number found inside the rear cover as, in common with many authors, I am deeply suspicious of Amazon sales figures and royalty payments.)
- I can also be contacted on [paddy.carpenter@gmx.com](mailto:paddy.carpenter@gmx.com)
- I am still in regular touch with Mike Challis, Tom Sage, Chris Sargent, Jim Anslow and Bill Hipperson; possibly also Alan Slate, from the Mitcham Grammar days. Tom even made the journey to Highnam Court, near Gloucester, for my formal book launch. Mike and his wife also came; though it was only the same few miles for them as for us as we are neighbours: I have lived next door to Mike since 1972.
- Mike, Tom, Bill and Alan all came to Mitcham Grammar from Gorrington Park Juniors and I think also from the Infants with me. Likewise Freddie Catt and Alan Wilson who both sadly died some years ago, and David Couzens who became a headmaster but who passed away in January 2013. David played Veterans Rugby well into his sixties.
- If anyone knows of any contact details for the aforementioned Adrian Jackson, English master, circa 1959, I would be most pleased to have them as he figures in the acknowledgements of ***UNSAFE*** and it would be wonderful to be able to send him a copy.