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At the end of the 20th century England was a country in turmoil. Privatisation, miners' strikes, inflation and poll tax had left its inhabitants disillusioned with successive governments.

However, nestled in the south east corner of the country was a little old town called Hastings, where the townsfolk seemed immune to the political issues around them. It was full of colourful characters – from artists to fishermen – who often met in a tavern called the *Lord Nelson*. From here they organised strange events such as pram races, pub crawls, bike races, tug-o'-war competitions and beach concerts. All they wanted was fun.

**Glenn Veness** *film maker*



Supported using public funding by  
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WEDNESDAY 29 OCTOBER 8.00 pm

### ELECTRIC PALACE

39a High Street, Hastings  
7.15 for 8.00 pm

£7.00 / £5.00 concessions

### Barbaric Genius: Documentary on John Healy by Paul Duane (Eire, 72 mins, 2011)

A bottle of 'Blue' was a cheap way to tackle the cravings for alcohol. It also took the edge off the morning's hangover, helped the day slip by and lessened the terrors of rough sleeping.

But you need to dilute the poison of surgical spirits – and the easiest place to get fresh water would be scooping it from the font of a church into a milk carton.

Dan Carrier *Camden Journal*

In 1988 Faber published *The Grass Arena*, an acclaimed autobiography of a former vagrant alcoholic John Healy who spent 15 violent years in a wino jungle when begging carried an automatic prison sentence. Healy had been a boxer, winning many amateur titles, absconded

from the army, gone to ground in many countries.

In prison Harry the Fox taught Healy to play chess. Out of prison he was a lookout for a mob that ran scams on post office books using a public toilet washroom as their HQ.

He won 10 major British chess tournaments, forcing a draw from Soviet grandmaster Rapheal Vaganian, then second-best player in the world. Frustrations between Healy and his editors led to the book being deemed out of print by Fabers. Over 5000 copies of this best seller were destroyed. The reputation of Healy was destroyed. He would become invisible, shoved out of the writing world. It would be harder to reappear.

What became of Healy, almost forgotten for a dozen years is explored in the first documentary about Healy's life. *The Grass Arena* was described on *Newsnight* by Kirsty Wark as a literary sensation, and Matthew Sweet declared it one of the great works of the twentieth century on *Radio 3*.

**Barbaric Genius** The film unfolds like a detective novel, following the clues along the way, tracking down the real story. *The Grass Arena* is about to be rescued by an American editor at 'Penguin Modern Classics' who knew nothing of – and cared less about – the insidious way the system conspired to pretend the book had never existed. Here is the evidence that shows Healy's paranoia is based on something very real – a subtle conspiracy of class and education against a man who wrote a masterpiece.

What had become of Healy in all those years, and who remains culpable?

*The Grass Arena* by John Healy. It's a long and brilliant postcard from hell. A brutal childhood, alcoholism, a London underworld – this is what it's like to touch bottom, then find your way up through the game of chess. Ian McEwan

THURSDAY 30 OCTOBER 7.00 pm

### ELECTRIC PALACE

39a High Street, Hastings  
6.15 for 7.00 pm – note early start

£8.00 / £6.00 concessions

### An evening with Timothy Neat and friends

Two films *The Summer Walkers* (Timothy Neat & Hamish Henderson, Scot, 53 mins, 1976) and *Rathad Nan Ceard (The Road of the Tinkers)* (Scot, 28 mins, 1995) in Scots Gaelic (with subtitles)

*The Summer Walkers* is a documentary about the Scots Travelling People – a

group long known as tinkers. Cheaply made, it is a simple, old-fashioned film. It portrays a fascinating, vanishing group of British nomads who have maintained an essentially palaeolithic lifestyle across millennia. We see tinsmiths and pearl fishers, hawkers and horse-dealers, and hear great songs sung by unique tradition bearers.

Timothy Neat will give an illustrated talk on his photographs, including those of 1960s rural Spain, and of travelling people. He will then discuss his work with the audience and introduce *Rathad nan Caird (The Tinker Roads)*. This documents poet and folklorist Hamish Henderson and Gaelic piper Norman Maclean renewing contact with many of *The Summer Walkers*, 20 years later.

Henderson wrote *The Freedom Come All Ye*. Billy Connolly saluted him at the Cultural Olympics as Scotland's great-uncle. Etruscan Books published Hamish



Photo: Glyn Roberts



Tinker Camp. Silhouette: Timothy Neat, 1976



Henderson's first collection of poems and songs in 50 years in *Pervigilium Scotia*.

A photographer, migratory bee keeper, wild mushroom gatherer and writer, Timothy Neat was raised in Cornwall. He wrote the biography of Hamish Henderson, and he filmed Hallaig with Sorley MacLean. *Play Me Something* (made with John Berger) won the Europa Prize at Barcelona 1989. His new book is *These Faces – Photographs and Drawings*. Neat is an HRSA and Fellow of the Association of Scottish Literary Studies.

Alasdair Roberts recorded his song of Neat's poem *The Ugly Mountain*.

#### PLUS

*Here We'm Be Together* (Eng, 13 mins, 2014)

A field-recorded encounter with some of the more eccentric folk rituals of the Norfolk Broads – through the eyes of one homegrown fabulist. Rob Curry and Tim Plester's long-awaited follow up to *Way of the Morris* features music by Sam Amidon as well as iconic Norfolk artists Billy Bennington and Sam Lerner.

They have recently started production on *The Ballad of Shirley Collins*, a lyrical response to the life and work of Hastings-born folk legend Shirley Collins. [www.shirleycollinsmovie.com](http://www.shirleycollinsmovie.com)

Nicholas Johnson presents 3 short films by Rebecca E Marshall filmed in West Devon where much of his *Collected Longer Poems, And Stood upon Red Earth All A Round*, is set. These are films "responding to folk in rural Devon – the playing of skittles with its remarkable rhythms, hearing the naming of fields only in spoken word not on maps, the red soaked earth in winter and a strange poet with his inside out outside in house and family."

Ticket includes a complimentary copy of *Listening To The Stones, Poems of New Caledonia*, by Nicholas Johnson – a post colonial work about French occupation in New Caledonia, and the events that led to the Heingene and Ouvea massacres, subject of Mathieu Kassovitz's controversial film *Rebellion*.

*The deep feeling for the West Country terrain, the vernacular outcroppings that run like ripples through the text, make Nicholas Johnson's poetry a haunting and wonderful reading experience.*

Edward Dorn

**FRIDAY 31 OCTOBER 7.30 pm**

#### THE BEACON

67–68 St Mary's Terrace (opposite steps of 12 St Mary's Terrace), Hastings  
Doors open 6.00 pm for supper menu  
Performance 7.30 pm

£10.00 / £8.00 concessions

#### Alasdair Roberts (solo concert) and Meg Bateman

Two sets by **Alasdair Roberts**, and two sets by **Meg Bateman**, one of her Gaelic poetry, in Gaelic and English and the second, of her translations from Gaelic poetry, *Songbook of the Pillagers*.

*It was your lightness that drew me,  
The lightness of your talk and your laughter,  
The lightness of your cheek in my hands,  
Your sweet gentle modest lightness;*

*And it is the lightness of your kiss  
That is starving my mouth,  
And the lightness of your embrace  
That will let me go adrift.*

Meg Bateman



Alasdair Roberts (photo: Clara Regueiro)

Iain Crichton Smith wrote that Meg Bateman "seems to display with deep feeling and exact imagery the women's experience of love in a manner that recalls the great songs of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries."

Rhyme in her early poems link her poems to the tradition of popular Gaelic song. In these songs, Bateman finds a precedent for a feminine voice in Scottish Gaelic poetry. While entry into the professional caste of poets who dominated Gaelic culture until the seventeenth century was entirely closed to women, the anonymous, vernacular song tradition that survived the destruction of the bardic system often spoke with a female voice. Her four books are *Òrain Ghaoil / Amhràin Ghrà* – 1989, *Aotromachd agus Dàin Eile / Lightness and other Poems* (1997), *Soirbheas / Fair Wind* (2007) and *Transparencies* (2013).

#### Alasdair Roberts

*A master of scordatura techniques on the guitar... an exceptional lyricist... the sound of new myths and new music being hewn from folk's stone. The Wire*

Singer, guitarist, songwriter based in Glasgow, born in Swabia, Germany. Since 1997 he has released 11 albums, mostly on *Drag City*. Roberts's extraordinary lyricism takes its place in the lineage of a Scottish literary tradition encompassing modernist poets such as Iain Crichton Smith, Sorley MacLean and Hugh MacDiarmid, back through Robert Burns and Robert Tannahill to the mediaeval 'makars' and Gaelic bards of Dark Age Dalriada.

Alasdair is driven by collaboration, in diverse mediums: with Shane Connolly, whom he worked on a puppet theatre interpretation of the Scottish folk play *Galoshins*, film makers (including Luke Fowler, contributing a soundtrack to his film *All Divided Selves*) and, last year the poet Robin Robertson, with whom he made *Hirta Songs*, a song cycle about the remote Scottish archipelago of St Kilda.

His musical work mainly consists of two parallel strands: self-written song material – on *Farewell Sorrow* (2003), *The Amber Gatherers* (2007), *Spoils* (2009), *A Wonder Working Stone* (2013), and *Alasdair Roberts* (2015) – together with

interpretations of traditional songs and ballads from Scotland and beyond – on *The Crook of My Arm* (2001), *No Earthly Man* (2005) and *Too Long In This Condition* (2010). He collaborated with the Scottish Gaelic singer Mairi Morrison on *Urstan* (2012).

Alasdair Roberts is a member of the English/Scottish quartet The Furrow Collective. Their first album is *At Our Next Meeting*. They recently played at Etchingam, the closest Alasdair had got to performing in Hastings.

**SATURDAY 1 NOVEMBER 2.00 pm**

#### THE BEACON

67–68 St Mary’s Terrace (opposite steps of 12 St Mary’s Terrace), Hastings  
Doors open 12.00 noon for lunch menu  
Performance 2.00 pm

£8.00 / £6.00 concessions

**Helen Macdonald and Patrick McGuinness, poets and authors of prose works: *H is for Hawk* and *Other People’s Countries*** (with Cape’s support)

**Patrick McGuinness** “has written the great book on Belgium and modern memory, *Other People’s Countries*. He takes his place among those singers and painters of the haunted, the melancholy, the diminished, the caricatural, the hum-drum: Ensor, Rodenbach, Sax, Huysmans, Simenon and Magritte.”

Michael Hoffman

Patrick McGuinness is that vanishing figure: the multi-lingual, multi-cultural, pan-European literary polymath. He is the poet of *The Canal of Mars*, translator of Mallarmé’s *For Anatole’s Tomb*.

Tunisian born, raised in Venezuela and Belgium, he’s lived in Iran and Romania. He has edited exemplary editions of poets T.E. Hulme, Marcel Schwab and Lynette Roberts. His first novel *The Last Hundred Days* was set during the fall of Ceaușescu.

He is a Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres.



Photo: Marzena Pogorzaly

**Helen Macdonald’s, *H is for Hawk*** is this poet and falconer’s life with Mabel, a hawk, “an exemplar of the mysterious alchemy by which suffering can be transmuted into beauty”.

Melissa Harrison *Financial Times*



She bought Mabel for £800 on a Scottish quayside and took her home to Cambridge. Then she filled the freezer with hawk food, ready to embark on the long, strange business of trying to train this wildest of birds. *H is for Hawk* has been highly acclaimed since its summer publication for the beauty of its prose, for its portrayal of the hawk, of T.H. White, and of grief.

“T.H. White is part of my story,” she writes. “I have to write about him here because he was there. When I trained my hawk I was having a quiet conversation of sorts, with the deeds and works of a long-dead man... whose life disturbed me.”

Helen Macdonald has assisted with the management of raptor research and conservation projects across Eurasia, and bred hunting falcons for Arab royalty. She’s also sold paintings, been an antiquarian bookseller, shepherded a flock of fifty ewes and once attended an arms fair by mistake. Her poetry work *Shaler’s Fish* (2001) will be republished in a new Etruscan edition in 2015.

**SATURDAY 1 NOVEMBER 7.30 pm**

#### THE BEACON

67–68 St Mary’s Terrace (opposite steps of 12 St Mary’s Terrace), Hastings  
Doors open 6.00 pm for supper menu  
Performance 7.30 pm

£8.00 / £6.00 concessions

**John Healy, author of *The Grass Arena*, (Penguin Modern Classics) plus a reading with Stuart Christie, author of *Granny Made Me An Anarchist*, and *Pistoleros***

*We are utterly compelled both by the power of Healy’s story and his great power in the telling of it to stay by his side until the last word is writ.* Daniel Day Lewis

**John Healy**, a former wino and street thief, spent 15 years as a vagrant alcoholic on the streets who rose to become a chess master capable of playing several games simultaneously whilst wearing a blindfold. In 1986, living from hand to mouth on a rundown council estate

at Kings Cross, he wrote his savage masterpiece *The Grass Arena*, which has been almost universally acclaimed. The book and the film of the book have between them over a dozen major national and international awards.

An extraordinary man, a remarkable life.

John Healy’s other works include *The Metal Mountain*, *Streets Above Us* and *The Glass Cage*. They all should be put into print.

*In Rome, 2000 years ago, the sand they used for the arena was specially imported from Egypt because it soaked up blood quickly. I was thinking about that, and I thought we were in an arena ourselves when I was living on the street, only it was covered in grass. I was trying to convey a subculture where there is no law; it’s life or death. All over Britain there were grass arenas. I was trying to bring the reader into my world, to experience it with me – a vicarious experience, at least.*

*Then out of the blue I remembered a book I read about ancient Rome and the gladiators. It was set in the time of Nero, the people were starving but the Games were still going on.*

*There was a passage about a Harbour Master in Alexandria. He asked should he load the boats with food for the people or sand for the arena? He was told: “You fool, load the boats with sand for the arena.” Translated from Latin into English, ‘arena’ means ‘sand’. The surface of our arenas was grass.* John Healy

Spanish Civil War historian and anarchist writer, editor of *The Hastings Trawler* and *Anarchist Film Channel*, **Stuart Christie** returns to Hastings to read with Healy.



www.christiebooks.com hosts over 800 films and documentaries with anarchist and related libertarian themes.

Born in Partick, Glasgow the son of a hard-drinking trawlerman and a hairdresser, Christie was named after the country's best-known Stuart, Bonnie Prince Charlie – “the only man in history to be named after three separate sheep-dogs” as his fellow Partiquois, Billy Connolly, once said.

Like Andrew Kötting's *Gladys in Gallivant*, Christie was also much influenced by his grandmother. She “provided a moral barometer which married almost exactly with that of libertarian socialism and anarchism, and she provided the star which I follow.”

Christie met Spanish anarchist exiles in Bristol and decided that “I had to do more than just demonstrate and leaflet. I offered my services.” The mission he was assigned was to deliver explosives to Madrid for the latest attempt – the thirtieth, as it happened – to blow up General Franco.

**Duncan Campbell** *The Guardian*

But his mission was infiltrated. Christie was arrested in Madrid, aged 18, in possession of plastic explosives, and sentenced to 20 years imprisonment. The action was co-ordinated by the clandestine anarchist armed resistance organisation *Defensa Interior* for which Christie was acting as courier. The family's three-year campaign – supported by many writers, including Jean Paul Sartre – was mounted, and Christie was pardoned.

On his release from prison in 1967 Christie was involved in the re-formation of the Anarchist Black Cross and the launch of

the anarchist monthly *Black Flag*, and was later arrested and charged with seven others of being a member of the ‘Angry Brigade’ in what became – at the time – the longest trial in British judicial history. Acquitted on all charges at the Old Bailey trial Christie set up the anarchist publishing house Cienfuegos Press.

*Anarchists have a ‘bad name’ in the media, not because they can point to one indiscriminate massacre by anarchists – there have been none – but because the one thing holders of power fear is that they personally should be held responsible for their own actions.*

Stuart Christie

**SUNDAY 2 NOVEMBER 1.00 pm**

#### **ELECTRIC PALACE**

39a High Street, Hastings  
12.15 for 1.00 pm

£8.00 / £6.00 concessions

#### **A WAVE OF DREAMS, Louis Aragon**

Two leftfield treats based on Susan De Muth's translation of Aragon's surrealist classic: a spoken word performance of extracts by actor, **Alex Walker**, with live musical accompaniment by **Tymon Dogg** and **Alex Thomas** PLUS a screening of film-maker **Nichola Bruce**'s magical interpretation of an extract from the work, *Dreams, Dreams, Dreams*.

Louis Aragon's 1924 prose-poem-essay (*Une vague de rêves*) is a compelling, lyrical, first-hand account of the early days of surrealist experimentation in Paris. Aragon vividly describes, and philosophically evaluates, the inner adventures, the hallucinations and encounters with ‘the Marvelous’ which



Nichola Bruce: *Dreams, Dreams, Dreams*

took the young surrealists to the brink of insanity as a revolutionary new era in Art History was born.

Tymon Dogg, a singer-songwriter and composer, has collaborated with artists as diverse as The Clash, Nico, Enrique Morente, Hugh Hopper, Charles Hayward and Michael Horovitz. Until Joe Strummer's sudden death in 2002, Tymon was a member of the Mescaleros and composed the music for a number of Joe Strummer's Mescaleros songs including *Mondo Bongo* – to the strains of which Angelina Jolie fell in love while filming *Mr. & Mrs. Smith*.

*The Irrepresible Tymon Dogg 1968–2009* is out on Cherry Red records. Tymonn Dogg played Hastings Pier with Joe Strummer and The Mescaleros in 2002.

PLUS a performance by special guest **Peter Manson**, Glasgow-born translator of the poetry of Stéphane Mallarmé.

He is author of *Poems of Frank Rupture*, (Sancho Panza) and *Adjunct: an Undigest*.

*A seven-year creation, it manically folds together rueful diary entries, irreverent comments on artists, writers and musicians, gleeful misprints, and all sorts of found and heard material. Undigested in appearance, but regurgitated in combinations either crafted or mathematically determined, the consistent hilarity of its relentless, deadpan juxtapositions has inescapably serious implications too.*

**Robert Potts** *The Guardian*

His 2012 *Mallarmé: The Poems in Verse* (Miami University Press) were, in the account of Ian Thomson in the *Financial Times*: “a marvel of luminous precision. Sensitive at all times to Mallarmé's ideal of a literature stripped to the bone, the translation glows with a melancholy sense of absence (‘The flesh is sad, and I've read all the books’).”

SUNDAY 2 NOVEMBER 4.00 pm

**ELECTRIC PALACE**

39a High Street, Hastings  
3.15 for 4.00 pm

£8.00 / £6.00 concessions

**Two readings: poets and prose writers Tom Leonard and Tom Pickard, plus a film by Tom Pickard Roy Fisher: Birmingham's What I Think With**

(England, 50 mins, 1991)

There's a scene in the film in which **Roy Fisher** happens upon the house in working-class Birmingham where he was born in 1930 and lived until he was 23. The house has a fresh, new door, and the poet, a large white-haired gent in a parka, gives it a knock. A young Sikh boy answers. Fisher introduces himself and inquires whether he might have the old door, which he had noticed in the rubbish. His courteousness wins the boy over, and later we see the two studying a sandstone crag in a nearby wood; Fisher takes out a penknife and digs in, showing the boy how easily sandstone crumbles. Upon that foundation, the poet points out, Birmingham was built. **Ange Mlinko**

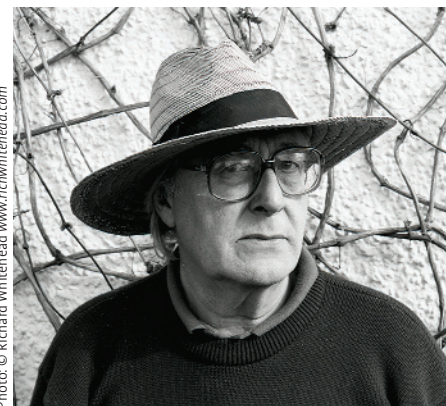


Photo: © Richard Whitehead www.richwhitehead.com

Alongside many short poems, Fisher wrote seminal long poems and prose poems: *The Ship's Orchestra*, *City*, *The Cut Pages* and *A Furnace*.

Featured jazz musicians in the film include Roy Williams, John Barnes, Len Skeat, Peter Cotteril, and Roy Fisher.

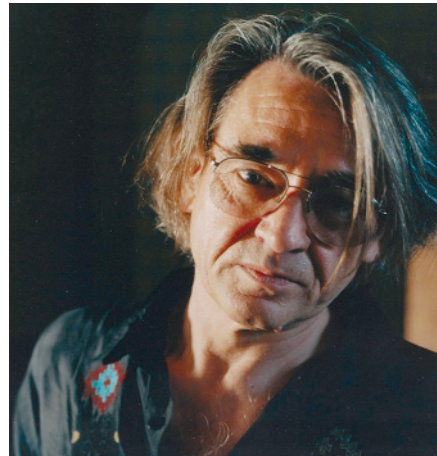


Photo: Chris Killip

Failing the 11-plus **Tom Pickard** attended a secondary modern school in Blakelaw, often in the remedial class, until 14 when he joined the Tyneside dole queues where his real education began. At 17 he met his mentor, poet Basil Bunting, and began co-running readings at the Morden Tower in Newcastle upon Tyne.

As well as a librettist and director of documentaries he has also worked and 'survived' as a benefit claimant, a dyker, labourer, book dealer, oral historian, itinerant poet, driver and scullion. He lives in the North Pennines near the Scottish border where he makes recordings of winds on Fiend's Fell, while walking and watching cloud shadows on distant hills.

He reads from *Hoyoot*, *Collected Poems and Songs* (Carc Janet). Tom Pickard has

collaborated locally with Liane Carroll, and John Harle.

*Sometimes men make sounds as birds do – just to sing. That need is so clear a fact of Tom Pickard's poetry men would do well to listen. They will not so soon again have so lovely a man to inform them.*

**Robert Creeley**



Photo: Al Bunting

**Tom Leonard** was born in Glasgow. Pivotal to the Glasgow renaissance, Leonard's poetry is visual, sonic and vital. He is also a great reader. Tom Leonard's 1984 poetry collection *Intimate Voices* remained in print for almost 20 years through five print-runs and with three separate publishers. In 2010 it was supplanted by *outside the narrative* (Poems 1965–2009), then in 2013 his collected prose writing was published as *Definite Articles*.

His *Places of the Mind: The Life and Work of James Thomson (B.V.)* remains the sole modern biography, with its epigraph from Swedenborg, of the poet of *The City of Dreadful Night*.

His translation of Brecht's *Mother Courage and her Children* was published this year.

*Regarded by many as one of Scotland's most influential writers – a revolutionary poet who has shaken up the literary*

*establishment in as many ways as it's possible for one man and a typewriter to do.* **Rosemary Goring** *The Herald*

*His poems written in Glaswegian are brilliant moral beauties, as perfect in every way as the lyrics of Hugh MacDiarmid or the best of William Carlos Williams.*

**Andrew O'Hagan** *The Observer*

SUNDAY 2 NOVEMBER 8.00 pm

**ELECTRIC PALACE**

39a High Street, Hastings  
7.15 for 8.00 pm

£8.00 / £6.00 concessions

**An evening with film director John Krish**

For viewers who have enjoyed Tom Pickard's film with its evocation of the waterways in dizzy sunlight, then its abrupt cut to a different kind of peace when old newsreel of Dylan Thomas with creaky music is broadcast, stay awhile longer for the end of the festival.

Hastings is honoured to welcome **John Krish**, who worked on Humphrey Jennings' *Listen to Britain* in 1942.

John Krish selects and introduces an evening of film and television documentary, spanning the 1950s to the 1970s, including *Captured*, a Prisoner of War drama – a lost gem of British post-war filmmaking – and a directed episode of *The Avengers*, for which he designed the intertitles.

In 2008, The British Film Institute published *Land of Promise*, a history of Documentary film making in Britain from 1930 – 1950. With it came DVDs of 40 films made by 25 directors.





The Elephant Will Never Forget (1953)

The BFI then decided to do the same thing, for the years 1951–1977. They published *Shadows of Progress* and chose four films from one director, John Krish to represent that entire period. This collection is called *A Day In The Life* and in 2010 it won the *Evening Standard* Award for Best Documentary.

The BFI describe John Krish as “one of British cinema’s best-kept secrets: a master of post-war documentary film-making who repeatedly turned his works into, not just effective non-fiction films, but truly stirring cinema to rank alongside the world’s greatest directors.”

John Krish entered the cinema as a teenager early in the second world war, working for the Crown Film Unit (on Harry Watt’s *Target for Tonight*) and the Army Film Unit (as an editor on Carol Reed and Garson Kanin’s *The True Glory*), before joining British Transport Films. It was with the latter group that he made his classic *The Elephant Will Never Forget* (1953), a beautiful movie about London’s last

tram journey. It was shown in a much acclaimed quartet of his pictures that travelled the country in 2010, including his infinitely moving *I Think They Call Him John* (1964).

Philip French *The Guardian*

*Captured* (65 min, 15), made for Military Intelligence, shows unflinchingly what it was like to be a British prisoner of the North Koreans in the 1950–1953 War. It was screened only to selected members of the Services.

This remarkable 1959 docu-drama was made for the Army Kinematograph Corps as an instructional film following the revelations about different forms of interrogation used by the enemy in the Korean war. Performed by such actors as Alan Dobie, Ray Brooks and Wilfrid Brambell, it’s a harrowing movie that illuminates its time and has immediate relevance for our own. It was, however, marked ‘restricted’, screened only to selected members of the Services, and withheld from the public until 2004.

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John Healy reads – along with Nicholas Johnson and John Hall – on Sunday 5 October at 6.00pm in the South Bank Centre, as part of the London Literature Festival.

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