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Mr Potter and his ‘Beast’

In 1968 television dramatist Dennis Potter was already a controversial figure in his native Forest of Dean when for his next play he took as inspiration a notorious local event: the killing of the bears. Such was the potency of this dark moment in Forest history that reaction against Potter’s choice of subject prompted a slew of letters to the local newspapers even before filming had started. This correspondence provides a fascinating insight into the Forest community’s relationship with the events of eighty years before, but even more so with Potter himself.

Dennis Potter (1934-1994) was one of the most influential figures in British television, and in particular in the creative development of British television drama. With more than forty original single television plays, drama serials and adaptations, he was someone dedicated to working in television because he saw it as a medium ‘of great power, of potentially wonderful delights, that could slice through all the tedious hierarchies of the printed word and help emancipate us from many of the stifling tyrannies of class and status and gutter press ignorance’.ⁱ He also wrote cinema screenplays, appeared on numerous radio programmes and in television documentaries, wrote several novels, television criticism and journalism. Thirty years after his untimely death from cancer, his influence can still be traced today in contemporary culture (see for example the production of Tim Price’s play *Nye*) and in arguments around the power and ownership of our media.

Dennis was born in Joyford near Berry Hill. His father Walter (1906-1975) was a Forest collier, his mother Margaret nee Wale (1910-2001) was a Londoner whose mother had left the Forest to ‘go into service’ there.ⁱⁱ Dennis and younger sister June (b.1936) went the village primary school at Christchurch, and attended Berry Hill’s Salem chapel. As a child he played in Berry Hill Band and later played rugby for the village team. After starting at Bells Grammar

School in Coleford Dennis completed his secondary education at St Clement Danes School in Fulham, having spent a period in London as a child when the family briefly moved there to live with relatives. For his compulsory National Service Dennis worked as a Russian translator in the Army Intelligence Corps, an experience that he drew upon in his memorable 1993 serial with songs drama *Lipstick on Your Collar*. He spent a brief stint working in Cinderford's Meredith and Drew biscuit factory before in 1955 entering New College Oxford on a scholarship to study Politics, Philosophy and Economics.

To be an Oxford undergraduate at this time was to be part of an elite group of young people, and as such of interest to members of the British establishment and the popular press. Potter himself soon began to gain attention. His maiden speech at the Oxford Union debate received a positive review in the University's student magazine *The Isis*, as did his performance in a college production of Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*.ⁱⁱⁱ His appearance in another production won praise from national theatre-weekly *The Stage*,^{iv} whilst his writing for and later editorship of *The Isis* brought attention from national newspapers^v. In 1958 he had a piece published in *The New Statesman* and made an appearance on the BBC Home Service as editor of *The Isis*.^{vi} He was then invited to take part in a television documentary series *Does Class Matter?* After Potter appeared (in the second episode of the programme), interviewed in his rooms at Oxford, the Dean Forest Guardian newspaper was not at all surprised:

When I heard that Mr. Christopher Mayhew, M.P., was to be responsible for a series about "Class" on B.B.C. Television, I thought that sooner or later Mr. Dennis Potter, the Oxford undergraduate who is a native of Joyford, would appear on it. And sure enough, in the second programme on Monday evening there he was.^{vii}

This spikey editorial also refers to Potter's piece in *The New Statesman*, before going on to say that 'Mr Potter [...] is obsessed with class'. It was a claim that Potter refuted in some detail in the following week's edition of the newspaper in a lengthy piece given the headline 'I am proud of my home and family...no obsession'.^{viii} It was preceded on the previous page by yet another editorial, this one pre-emptively commenting on Potter's piece.

After graduating from Oxford, in July 1959 Potter began work as a BBC trainee, a system aimed at providing a range of experience in various aspects of programme making and

broadcasting for the country's best graduates with a view to them taking up posts in the corporation. For Potter this included working on the production of weekly current affairs television programme *Panorama*. The edition broadcast on 30th November 1959 was titled *The Closure of Pits in the Forest of Dean*.^{ix} Filmed on location in the Forest it featured an interview with a local collier – none other than Dennis' own father Walt Potter. The programme was criticised in the *Dean Forest Mercury*^x by The Executive Committee of the Development Association of the Royal Forest of Dean for presenting an 'unnecessarily gloomy picture,' and was brought up again months later when on Friday 30th May the BBC's *Any Questions?* radio programme came from Coleford.^{xi}

The criticism of these two programmes (Potter's involvement in *Panorama* at the time was not known of locally, or at least not referred to in discussion of it) was only a foretaste of what was to come after the broadcast of his self-authored and self-presented documentary about class, culture and identity, *Between Two Rivers* (1960). The two rivers of the title denoted both the Forest of Dean's geographical location between Severn and Wye, and Potter's own sense of his identity being suspended between that of his working-class roots, and his acquired culture of the Oxford graduate with his 'shiny new degree'.^{xii} Filmed in various parts of the Forest of Dean, including Cinderford, Coleford and Berry Hill, it included footage of his family home and that of his neighbours, as well as interviews with several local people including family friends. The issues were examined through his own experience of growing up in, and then moving away from the Forest, and his argument within the documentary was effectively structured in two halves. The first portrayed his desperate need to escape what he painted as the confines of his culturally, socially and physically cramped life in the Forest, and his subsequent liberation at Oxford. The second half explained how he had then drastically revised his opinion of the working-class life and culture in the Forest, now instead recognising its integrity and unpretentiousness, and its potential to resist what he saw as the onslaught of banal commercial culture and mass media, or 'admass'.

Excoriating letters – that included such terms as 'disgusting film', 'a diabolical disgrace' and 'deplorable piece of unfair publicity' – appeared in the Forest newspapers for several weeks following the broadcast (as well as a few in praise of the programme). Potter himself joined in with his own contributions responding to the critical letters point-by-point. Such was the strength of local reaction against the film he recalled years later to John Cook: 'Christ, I thought they were going to lynch me'.^{xiii} Despite his robust defence of the programme in the

local newspaper at the time he would later admit that the film was a mistake and, when pressed, that with it he had in effect betrayed his parents.^{xiv}

One of the latter letters criticising *Between Two Rivers*, from a Mrs. D. M. Niblet of Joyford, concluded thus: 'What about making a new film of the Forest now? You may gain a little of your lost prestige.'^{xv} Unfortunately for Mrs. Niblet, Potter's next television programme to feature the Forest of Dean would be his drama inspired by the killing of the bears, *A Beast with Two Backs*.

The attack in the Forest of Dean in 1889 on four Frenchmen and the killing of their two dancing bears became a sensational story in the national press at the time^{xvi}. Reference to it quickly became used by people outside of the Forest of Dean as a means to ridicule Foresters as 'bear killers', and locally for residents of Cinderford to mock the people of Ruardean where the bears were killed. It was said that asking 'Who killed the bears?' in Ruardean was in effect an invitation to a fight. F. W. Harvey (1888-1957) referred to this in his humorous yet menacing poem 'Warning' (1926); John Moore (1907-1967) wrote about it in his travelogue *The Welsh Marches* (1933) and later drew on his own (supposed?) experience in a Ruardean pub after asking *that* question to inform a scene set in the village in his novel *White Sparrow* (1954); and Harry Beddington (1901-1986) described in a rumbunctious, Forest-dialect-verse 'Who Killed the Bears'^{xvii} what happened to his hero-narrator when he brought it up in Ruardean pub The Bell. Leonard Clark's (1905-1981) book *Who Killed the Bears* (1964) again begins with reference to the legend of the slur/invitation, but then recounts the known historical facts of what actually happened in 1889. As well as hearing the story growing up it seems likely that as Potter began to formulate his ideas, he would have also been aware of some or all of these works.

A Beast with Two Backs draws on elements of the real events of 1889 but the play is by no means a straight retelling of what happened. In the drama it is Joe, an Italian who arrives in the Forest with his single dancing bear Gina, briefly welcomed but then abused as a foreigner by local adults and children alike. Meanwhile local miner Mickey unwilling to leave his wife has instead attacked and seemingly murdered his mistress, Rebecca, who had just informed him she was pregnant. When, finally her dead body is discovered, Mickey succeeds in pinning blame for the killing onto the bear, aided in this by a wilfully misinterpreted sermon from the local fire and brimstone preacher Ebenezer. Joe and Gina are cornered in a local quarry, and Gina is beaten and stoned to death by Mickey and his associates.

On 1st March 1968 the Dean Forest Mercury announced that Dennis Potter had written ‘some new lines on the bear story’. Filming would begin the following week and this would include bringing ‘a fully grown Russian bear, Gina’ to the Forest. Gina was owned by Franz and Pamela Kreft,^{xviii} and the booking (and £750 fee) had been arranged through a ‘Mr. Smart’^{xix} (Ronnie, one of the three brothers then running their late father’s Billy Smart’s Circus). The Krefts came up from their home in Rhyl with Gina in their specially converted bus, with arrangements made for it to be parked up in Lower Lydbrook. Pamela Kreft recalled that actor Patrick Barr, who was cast as her owner Joe, was good with the bear but that Franz was always near-by and in some of the long shots it was in reality Franz in costume playing the part of Joe. Their son Carlos, then aged seven also appears in the play.

During filming the producers were based at The Royal Hotel in Ross-on-Wye. The Potters (Dennis, wife Margaret, daughters Jane and Sarah, and son Rob) had recently moved to live at Morecambe Lodge in the town after having moved back to the area the previous year, originally to Allaston Grove in Lydney.^{xx} The main cast had their makeup done at the hotel before travelling to the production’s location base in the Forge Hammer Inn at Lower Lydbrook where they would be put into costume. Tracy Hayler, whose grandmother Elvy Lawrence worked in the adjacent Viaduct Stores recalls being told that one of the production crew came into the shop to buy hairspray – saying it was for the bear!^{xxi}

Large parts of the play were filmed on location in Lydbrook and local people, including fifteen children from Lydbrook School were recruited as extras. Other locations included Goodrich Castle where Berry Hill Silver Band, suitably attired in period uniforms were filmed performing in a mocked-up bandstand. The final grim scene depicting the killing of Gina was filmed at Oak Quarry, arranged via the then Deputy Gaveler. The quarry today has been filled in and is the site of a recycling centre. At the time it was still relatively rare to shoot television dramas on film and on location and the choice was one that added considerably to the production’s costs.

The producers quickly became aware of how controversial the bear story was locally, as correspondence regarding arrangements for siting Gina’s bus makes clear:

‘It seems that our filming this story has genuinely stirred up considerable agitation in various quarters, because of the incident that happened so

many years ago in Cinderford [...] we would hate to expose you to any unpleasantness'.^{xxii}

Following initially productive contact by phone a letter along with a copy of the script was sent to Pastor A. J. Wilkinson requesting permission to film both inside and outside Lydbrook Baptist Church. A handwritten note afterwards added to the office copy of the letter simply says 'No go'^{xxiii}, the Dean Forest Mercury later stating that 'it was refused because it was feared that the story would cause old sores to fester.'^{xxiv}

Soon after the announcement that filming was about to start letters followed into the Dean Forest Mercury under the headline 'Them There Bears'.^{xxv} The first, from a today-familiar Ruardean resident a Mr A. E. (Andrew) Gardiner, focused mainly on describing the events of 1889 with reference to the memories of his aunt, Mrs. E. Lugg. Andrew recounted how the Frenchmen had been given refuge at the village's vicarage, and that with the first bear already beaten to death the second was shot by a local resident on the other side of the village. He concludes his letter in hope:

Finally I hope the play will be a success with the local dialect and scenery, perhaps with at least a few shots of Ruardean Tower. What about it Denis? [sic]

Ruardean was not to feature in location filming for the play. The next letter, from Mrs. Emily Moore of Cinderford was far less favourable, perhaps in part due to a sense of imagined professional rivalry, since as 'a former member of Mintec Players and Bilson (Cinderford) Women's Institute Drama Group' she had 'taken part in many local dialect plays.' Emily describes Potter's choice of underlying story as 'deplorable and quite unworthy of a local playwright' and in contrast to the 'good, clean Forest humour, written by Cinderford playwrights', here perhaps thinking of Harry Beddington. One of her concerns is that the actors will fail to capture the Forest accent: 'Personally I cannot wait to hear the phoney Somerset-cum-Devonshire-cum-Gloucestershire'. Her letter refers too to Potter's last occasion filming in the Forest (*Between Two Rivers*), sarcastically hoping that he 'profited from it', one sensing that what she really means is that she hopes he learned his lesson. In a letter that digresses into other entirely unconnected issues and anecdote, she concludes by writing that she is

amazed that Potter should choose to live in Lydney then Ross-On-Wye. Potter's response in print the following week opens in a humorous and razor-sharp tone:

But where on earth does Mrs. Moore think Lydney and Ross-on-Wye are, for goodness sake? I live a mere ten or eleven miles from where I was born and the Forest rears up in front of our windows like a great green giant. It's all the same patch of ground to me.

The letter to you, [the newspaper] however, was not the only one Mrs. Moore wrote last week. She also sent one to me, very different in tone, and it arrived safely all the way here to Ross with absolutely no trouble at the frontier posts.^{xxvi}

He goes on to thank Mr. Gardiner for his 'extremely interesting and beautifully written letter' before turning in more detail to the matter of the play itself, pointing out that it is not a retelling of what had happened in 1889:

I was fascinated not so much by the actual story as by its strange resonance and peculiarly powerful reverberations. It is, for me, a story about suspicion, fear, poisonous rumour, deep hostility to the stranger and, in an odd sort of way, a parable about crime and punishments.

Potter goes on to explain that though these themes are common to mankind everywhere – 'we are sometimes like Gods, sometimes like beasts, more often somewhere between the two' – he wanted to specifically set it in the Forest of Dean, partly because of the bear story but also because he had long been wanting to set a drama here. Whilst he fears many people locally will react to the play as Emily Moore and Lydbrook's Baptist church did, he hopes that others:

[W]ill see an attempt made by a Forest of Dean writer to convey the unique light-and-shade of our Forest of fascinating "land on its own" mentality, its astonishing contrasts, its mixtures of breathtaking beauty and sudden sour squalor, huge generosity and shrunken narrow-

mindedness, warm native wit and cold native suspicions, intense independence and magnificent pride of spirit occasionally corroded by gossipy back-biting jealousy. We Foresters know all about this, surely: it is what makes us the beings we are, which I wouldn't swap for anything.

This ambivalent view of the Forest is one Potter had already explored in print in some depth in his book *The Changing Forest* (1962).

Another letter that week came from a Mrs. Ward, formerly of Ruardean who, after making her own contribution to the historical details of the 1889 event, asked why the play was not being filmed in Ruardean. Meanwhile an endorsement for the play came from Ken Sollars^{xxvii} of Lydbrook who clearly had some detailed knowledge of the play's script and production:

The story outline is strong. The use of the "murder of a bear" with the "murder of a man", in addition to the eternal triangle is classical.

I think that the author has done well considering he has had a number of plays screened on television; after all he is still "only a bit of a boychap".

Personally, I could not understand the officials of the chapel who were unwilling to co-operate. The producer only required a chapel scene and service.

A fortnight later Emily Moore's reply to Potter was published, and with witty good grace she admits that he will now have 'the last laugh' as she too is moving to Ross-On-Wye!^{xxviii} A week later, entirely in dialect with a letter starting 'Zurr' [Sir], Frank Yemm of Newnham manages to weave the bears into that perennial Forest issue, free roaming sheep: 'Wy doan un leave tha bairs abide, umm be jud now let um be, an as vert tha zhip [...]'

All of this correspondence was of course before the play had even been seen. *A Beast with Two Backs* was broadcast as part of the BBC's Wednesday Play strand on 20th November 1968, and with Forest residents now having finally seen it, the letters once again flew in to the Dean Forest Mercury. Under the headline 'Mr. Potter's "Beast" gets hounded and commended'^{xxix} the coverage opened with an editorial describing it as 'a brutal piece of

drama' that was 'a ghastly experience' to watch but also 'a clever bit of drama' that one was compelled to see through to the end.

The first correspondent's letter was a joint affair, signed from the entire Christian family of Tuffley and a Mrs. Dawson nee Christian of Cinderford. Whilst their main criticism was of the play's seemingly negative portrayal of religion - Potter using it as the 'whipping boy' - they also criticised its quality, writing that 'The general standard of acting was poor. It was a hack production'. Mrs. Evelyn Davis of Worrall Hill was even more forthright in her critique:

We did not know Lydbrook was going to be degraded but Dennis Potter's portrayal of the Forest of Dean in the play "The bear with two backs" [sic] has certainly devalued it. An utter load of rubbish.

A letter in praise of the play from Y. R. Haworth of Lydney used it as an opportunity to take a pot shot at Forests as a whole:

Seldom have I observed such an accurate portrayal of people and personality than that related to the residents of the Forest of Dean.

Mr Potter is to be congratulated on his unerring attention to detail: it was all there – the bigotry, the malicious gossip, the evil informer, the scandalous indiscretion, the total intolerance; it could only be based on absolute fact.

There was reference to one elderly correspondent, Mrs. Louisa Dudfield aged 87 who remembered that when she was a child the bears and their handlers travelled through Dymock, staying the night at The Crown Inn where she lived. In yet another correspondent's piece that week someone who would in later years become a well-known and much-loved Forest local writer and poet J. A. (Joyce) Latham (1932-2007) neatly encapsulated the play in this poem:

On! What a wondrous sight to see
The "Forest" on our own T.V.!
Complete with scenery so rare,

And that ill-fated bear.
The drama too, of murder foul,
Lamented by a sleepless owl;
And poor, bewildered Rufus, who
Could never tell the things he knew.
Man's thoughtless, pointless cruelty
Was here portrayed for all to see.
And though the story we have known,
By Dennis Potter's pen has grown
Into a tale of hurt and hate
Entwined around poor Gina's fate:
Do tell me. PLEASE, Who killed the bear?

It is worth remembering that in 1968 it would have been a novelty to see the Forest 'on our own TV', and perhaps understandable that viewers would wish to see it portrayed in a more positive light. Much of the criticism of the play, the *Panorama* feature, and Potter's 1960 documentary had focused on the absence in the footage of the Forest's more picturesque locations. Looking back on the *A Beast with Two Backs*' production, in 1993 Potter recalled that he had wanted to 'explore the claustrophobic setting of the forest [...] the sense of isolation and inturnedness'.^{xxx} It is a darkly themed play and it is hard to imagine it working at all well if it had been filmed at the more idyllic landscape spots in the Forest.

Another local writer, none other than Cinderford's Harry Beddington, also wrote a wonderfully evocative piece in the Dean Forest Mercury that same week (in 1968) summing up local feelings about the play, reproduced here in full:

Having watched, enjoyed and admired Dennis Potter's play on Wednesday night I was not surprised next morning to find in Cinderford how deeply feelings had been stirred.

The small group which meets regularly at the corner of the new shops had been considerably augmented and I was hailed imperiously – "Hey Arry, come tha' over 'ere" and was faced with the general question "What did'st thou think o' thic play o' Potter's?"

There seemed to be a general indignation that the play had ignored the beauty of the Forest – “Thou’st ‘ave thought thou wast in the slate quarries o’ Festiniog” and had missed completely the innate kindness of many Foresters - “We b’yunt all as bad as ‘im made out – our feyther’s weren’t neither.”

In Defence

My defence of Dennis Potter and praise of his play were listened to rather grimly and not without some pithy protests. I left with a parting shot whistling round my ears – “If ‘im went down there this marnin’ thay’d put a muzzle on un an’ ‘ang un on Pinderrey’s Tump.”

As I went home I reflected – What a pity Joe and his loveable bear hadn’t approached Lydbrook from over Joy’s Green with those lovely views of the river below, down by the Church and on through the very impressive and lovely gorge where Upper and Lower Lydbrook meet.

No Room

What a pity too that no room had been found in his grim story for some of the dignified kind old folk one has always been able to meet in any part of the Forest.

I hope that some day soon, Dennis Potter will apply his great genius to the writing of a play which will draw on the wealth of beauty of his native soil and will portray the kind good humour and sound sense of his own folk.

The following year *Son of Man* (1969), and a decade later *Pennies from Heaven* (1978) that also featured filming in the Forest of Dean, would both provoke a further series of letters to the Dean Forest Mercury, most of them criticising Dennis Potter and the work, though again some defending it including in the latter case in a letter from The Forest Bookshop owner Doug McLean. *A Beast with Two Backs* was though the last time Dennis Potter chose to personally engage with his local critics so directly through writing himself to the Forest of Dean newspapers. Certainly, by the time that *Pennies from Heaven* was broadcast Potter was very

much part of the British television establishment, and perhaps felt it was unseemly, unfair even, to wade in so stridently against his local critics^{xxxii}.

Reflecting on *A Beast with Two Backs*, again many years later, he conceded in effect that some of the local criticism regarding its portrayal of its Forest of Dean setting was justified:

Unfortunately I don't think it actually did show the true nature of the forest, rising in layers between two rivers – green, black, green, black, huddled, interned. Some of it didn't get across^{xxxiii}.

Reading the wealth of local letters in response to Potter and his choice of topic, and to the play itself, it becomes clear that the writers cared deeply about how their Forest of Dean was portrayed. They were critically engaged too with television, and television drama as an artform.

Watching the play today is to watch an historical record: of late 1960s television drama production techniques; of Dennis Potter's continuing development as a dramatist; and of parts of Lower Lydbrook now long-since demolished. The most disturbing aspect of the play for modern audiences is seeing poor Gina. Cared for by her owners the Krefts but still, a captive animal trained to perform tricks.

As for the story of the killing of the bears and that slur, this reaction from a Drybrook resident at the 2015 Lydbrook screening of *A Beast with Two Backs* gives a lovely insight into its perceived status today:

I've always felt the bears was a secret...that actually now you can go into pubs in Ruardean and not be beaten up, and I think that's a bit of a shame^{xxxiii}.

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ⁱ The James MacTaggart Memorial Lecture, Edinburgh Film Festival, 1993 in Dennis Potter, *Seeing the Blossom: Two Interviews and a Lecture* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994) 55

ⁱⁱ Humphrey Carpenter, *Dennis Potter: The Authorized Biography* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), 8.

ⁱⁱⁱ W. Stephen Gilbert, *Fight & Kick & Bite, The Life and Work of Dennis Potter* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995) 50-51.

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- ^{iv} The Forester, 10 June 1994.
- ^v As detailed by both Gilbert (1995; 51-63) and Carpenter (1998; 69-79), in 1957 there was a dispute within the Union over an article written, though never published, in *The Isis*; later, due largely to an article it published against nuclear weapons, two of its staff were charged by Special Branch; and in 1958, for Potter's outspoken anti-establishment editorial stance, its publishers finally dismissed him from the editorship. These incidents all drew the attention of the national press and Potter himself featured significantly in their coverage.
- ^{vi} W. Stephen Gilbert, 323.
- ^{vii} Dean Forest Guardian, 29 August 1958.
- ^{viii} Dean Forest Guardian, 5 September 1958. After Potter, with the support of the BBC, issued a writ against a similar story in the Reynolds News newspaper they paid his costs and printed an apology.
- ^{ix} W. Stephen Gilbert, 324.
- ^x Dean Forest Mercury, 11 December 1959.
- ^{xi} Dean Forest Guardian, 6 May 1960. The panellists at the Baptist Schoolroom were Lady Violet Bonham Carter D.B.E., Anthony Wedgwood Benn M.P., C. A. Joyce and Stephen McAdden M.P. Questions included, Mr. Godfrey S. G. Nash of Angel Filed asking 'Do the team consider the attitude of the British toward nudism prudish?' and Mrs. Harry Smith asking, 'What can one do with a husband who snores? I pinch, punch, shake and shout, but all to no avail'.
- ^{xii} *Between Two Rivers*, BBC Television 3 June 1960.
- ^{xiii} John R. Cook, *Dennis Potter: A Life on Screen* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995) 14.
- ^{xiv} An Interview with Alan Yentob, BBC2, 1987 in Dennis Potter, *Seeing the Blossom: Two Interviews and a Lecture* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994) 63.
- ^{xv} Dean Forest Mercury, 8 July 1960.
- ^{xvi} Drawing on his extensive research into the subject Dr Roger Deeks has argued that the story was picked up and covered in such detail by the national press for reasons of British geopolitical interests at the time, and debates around electoral reform. Outlined in a talk at 'Bear Stories: 130yrs of poems, books, tales & films since the killing of the bears', Ruardean, 27 April 2019.
- ^{xvii} H. J. Beddington, *Forest of Dean Humour* (Cinderford: H. J. Beddington, 1961).
- ^{xviii} Pamela Kreft interviewed by the author, 26 May 2015. Pamela explained that Franz was working with Prince Cox's Circus when it visited her home town of Rhyl when they met and then married in 1954. Whilst they were working for Wilkie's Circus they met Hans Peterson, a Dane who had three trained bears that they bought, one of whom was Gina.
- ^{xix} Letter addressed to Mr Smart, 19 February 1968. BBC Written Archives.
- ^{xx} Before this Dennis, wife Margaret and their children had briefly spent a period living at Northrepps near Cromer in Norfolk. See: <https://pottermatters.weebly.com/dennis-potter-heritage-map.html> Accessed 15 June 2024.
- ^{xxi} Tracy Hayler, Lydbrook, interviewed by the author, 3 November 2016.
- ^{xxii} Letter addressed to D. Oakley, Esq, 26 February 1968. BBC Written Archives.
- ^{xxiii} Letter from Ann Kirch production assistant t Lionel Harris, Plays Department Television, 2 February 1968. BBC Written Archives.
- ^{xxiv} Dean Forest Mercury, 1 March 1968.
- ^{xxv} Dean Forest Mercury, 15 March 1968.
- ^{xxvi} Dean Forest Mercury, 22 March 1968.
- ^{xxvii} In 1989 Ken wrote his poem '1889, Who Killed the Bears' for a centenary event held in Ruardean. His 1019 reading of the poem can be heard in Series 1, Ep 2 of the Reading the Forest Podcast.
- ^{xxviii} Dean Forest Mercury, 5 April 1968.
- ^{xxix} Dean Forest Mercury, 29 November 1968.
- ^{xxx} Graham Fuller, ed., *Potter on Potter* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993) 36.
- ^{xxxi} He did comment briefly on local criticism of *Pennies from Heaven* in an interview with Sue Rushton in the Dean Forest Mercury, 31 March 1978: 'If people object, it proves that they are anxious and it is this anxiety that I am examining in the play; I am not setting out to shock'.
- ^{xxxii} Fuller, 36.
- ^{xxxiii} Interviews by Ivor Richards with visitors to 'A Beast with Backs...is Back!' screening, exhibition and talks event organised by University of Gloucestershire, University of Warwick, The Dean Heritage Centre, and Forest of Dean Local History Society, in partnership with the British Film Institute.