# INTERVIEW: IAN & JANE

**Q1b. Have you always lived in Milton Keynes? (When did you arrive? What was your first impression? What reasons prompted your move?)**

IAN:

We moved to Milton Keynes when we were 27 years old, having lived elsewhere before that. And we were already married. And we lived 18 months in London before Milton Keynes, No?

JANE:

Maidenhead.

IAN:

Oh Yes, three years in Maidenhead. You'd better answer this question.

JANE:

Three years and Maidenhead after we got married in late 62. And we went to Shropshire and then moved from Shropshire. After two years there, we moved down here. December 67.

IAN:

But then we went from here to America for 3½ years. And then to London briefly for 18 months and then back to this house and to the work in Milton Keynes, which was just beginning as a new city.

INTERVIEWER:

So, what was it that brought you to the area, the first time and then the second time?

IAN:

Well the first time it was to train teachers in drama, North Buckinghamshire College of Education, which was housed in Bletchley Park. And so that's what it was.

JANE:

And then I got a job because of it. I came down and got a job teaching in New Bradwell.

IAN:

And I'll digress there and then because amongst my students were many people who are stalwarts, or have been stalwarts of Stony Stratford, and life in Stony Stratford; one of them for example, was Rod Hall, who founded "folk on the green", and whose three houses that he lived in, in Stony all have his decorations: Wheatsheaf and the Sun and various things on the outside.

JANE:

And Holly I believe on Coronation Road. I don't know if that's still there.

IAN:

So that's Rod, and people like xxxx, Sue Malleson. They were students in college,

JANE:

Girlfriend of a student, she keeps telling me!

IAN:

Oh, right. Okay. Yeah. Andy was. So, although that period of work was just a few years, the students, who were training there, did stay in this area and contributed to life here. Rod Hall is a fabulous musician. And so, I did a production of Caucasian Chalk Circle, for example. And he was able to produce all the music for it then, subsequently, when we were back in Milton Keynes and doing the documentary plays, he was one of the musicians in the musical teams that we created to play.

JANE:

He was a composer not just a player,

IAN:

He brought in people, almost an orchestra really for the play Days of Pride and managed/created the orchestra for the purpose, and they played the music for the show. And so, some of his songs that he wrote for one or two documentaries, are still sung to this day, by the Living Archive Band.

INTERVIEWER:

So it was the forming of Milton Keynes, sort of what brought you back to the area? Or was it just a coincidence?

IAN:

Yes, it was.

JANE:

We kept this house; we bought this house in 1967 and when we went to the States, we didn't sell it. But a friend of ours moved in and kept it going. Right?

IAN:

Yeah and staying with that house for a moment. I mean, we feel we're living in a piece of history with this house. It was built in 1736.

JANE:

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IAN:

1739 is the date on the sundial. And we have deeds that go back to 1800 or something. So, we know quite a bit about some of the people who lived in this house. Before us. It was a bakery shop; this is a shop, this room here. When we bought it you could still see Hovis and Bread written on the two big central panes there. We've got an old picture of the house from about 1900, 1890 something, where everybody who worked in the bakery is standing outside the house, in the photograph. So, we've got that sense of history just in the place where we live.

JANE:

Can I just say one other thing about that? About the bakery. We had in the room over there next door, (we’ve done every bit of the house) we couldn't understand why the tiles were more worn in certain areas than others, particularly the red ones. And when we came to do this,  (this is the second or third time we've done it) the builders discovered the great hole where the baker's oven used to be, and the worn stones were where the bakers would be pushing the bread into the oven. So, it's just those little things about the house, which are so fascinating.

IAN:

If you go down New Street. They've got those quarry titles in the external parts to the houses of some of them.

JANE:

We went to work in the States. We came back here at the end of 72. To this, to the house. But Roy had got a job (and that was why we were able to come back) in London as director of drama and goodness only knows what else at Wanstead High School. So, my job then was to get this house ready for rental. And then I went up and joined him. We had a place up there.

IAN:

But our return to this house was occasioned by the job of director of drama at Stantonbury Campus, which was just a hole in the ground when I got the job.  I was part of the team that designed the curriculum and plan the school and what shape it was. It was a very experimental wonderful school in those days. Okay, well. So Stantonbury Campus was the reason.  Geoff Cooksey was the director and he was an incredibly enlightened educator, who gave, he certainly gave his senior members of staff total autonomy to develop their work in the way they saw fit. So, there were two directors apart from Geoff. One was Hilary Davan Wetton, the musician who created the Milton Keynes Chamber

Orchestra, and the Milton Keynes Chorale and the Music Centre all based at Stantonbury. And mine was director of drama. The responsibility was initially teaching in the school, but it was also developing professional theatre, professional dance, and running the theatre, and creating a theatre in education company. All those things were possible because of the freedom that was accorded to the job.

JANE:

And the Stantonbury Campus Drama Group, which was basically the …..

IAN:

….. that was the vehicle …..

JANE:

….. the vehicle which we worked in the very early days, and which was what led to the Living Archive.

IAN:

So, the first people who paid my salary, that was the Development Corporation, but the Bucks County Council adopted it. So, I always felt that there was a community development strand to the education work. And so, when we created the, the adult... Well, the community drama company, as well as putting on plays which is what any amateur theatre company wants to do, we, from the very start wanted to develop a tradition of documentary theatre. So, the first documentary play we did almost immediately was not a local subject. And it was one that fascinated me, a historical event that

fascinated me. And, and it really gave us the confidence. It was the Burston School Strike, it was a strike that lasted from 1913

JANE:

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IAN:

Up until 1939 in Norfolk. And for that we took our company to Norfolk and performed our version of the play in the site where the events happened, you know, all those years before. And people from Norfolk who came from Burston came to Stantonbury to watch the play performed, when it was finished, on the stage. And there's a remarkable event there when the woman…. when…. when the class of children in this village school were informed that their head teacher, their teacher, who was also a head teacher, was sacked. She told them that she lost her job, and wouldn't be teaching them anymore, along with her husband, the other teacher. Then, when they left the room and the class was on their own, this girl of about 13 or 14, called Violet Potter, in the context of a very shocked group of children, went to the front of the class and she wrote on the blackboard, "We are going on strike tomorrow." And that launched the strike. I mean, those kids went home, told their mums and dads that they were going to not go to school anymore because of this event. And the whole village turned out on the green at night, in a kind of demonstration. There was a policeman at the school door the following morning and a school attendance officer and other officials, and when the children apparently were marching towards the school, they just marched past the school and revealed these great banners that said "We want justice" "We want our teachers back" etc. And they sang The Red Flag and they marched around the village. So, I discovered these facts of history, which would have been lost to history had a man called Bertram Andrew Edwards not discovered them and written a book called The Burston School Strike. And that was the book I found, and we became friends. I told him we'd love to make a play about it. And he was terribly supportive and keen on it. And introduced

us to the original strikers back in Burston, so we could interview them. And that's what, that's what created the first thing. And on the strength of that, because it's hugely successful as piece of drama.

JANE:

Tell the story of Violet Potter, you started.

IAN:

Oh, yeah, I mean, on a Saturday matinee when the Norfolk people were in the audience, the play ends with the building of the Strike School, the opening of the Strike School, which is still there on Burston village green ….. and Sylvia Pankhurst was there and made a fabulous speech, which we've got verbatim. But the final speech …. and there's lots of Morris dancing and other celebrations going on ….. But the final speech was by Violet Potter herself, the girl who started this strike. And, when our actor playing Violet was about to speak those lines, the actual Violet Potter was sitting on the front row in theatre in the round, and our actress just picked her up. And she walked onto the stage, aged 65 by then.

JANE:

No, she was way over that.

IAN:

I don't know she was. She was ……

JANE:

….. maybe she just seemed later,

IAN:

In her 60s, I think, and she spoke the same words she'd spoken 50-60 years before. Yes, she perhaps was older. And which were "I declare this school open, to be forever a school for freedom". Now, can you imagine that coming out of the real Violet Potter's mouth? And at the end of such a play, in which you told the whole story. So, by that time, yeah, we were fizzing and excited with the possibilities for documentary theatre. And the Development Corporation said, would we do one on a local subject, and offered me £2000 if I would. And I immediately said yes, and spent the £2000 on the researcher, who was a lady called Margaret Broadhurst who spent a year with that money, it was a pittance for she what she did. Going, wherever we sent her. She'd come back with original documentary material, because our rule of work was, we would invent nothing, everything would be a primary source material, or it could not be admitted into the text of the play. It would be transmuted into dialogue and exciting drama and by editing and juxtapositions and all of the things you probably know about, you can make exciting theatre, very immediate theatre. But the actual words spoken were recorded as having been spoken by real people in a real event in some real time in the past. And so, the very helpful book by Frank Markham on Stony Stratford was, I mean, it was not anything we could directly use because everything, had passed through the medium of his educated mind. And that was the language that came out into the book. But he was smart enough to have footnotes saying where he got his material from. And it was the House of Lords Records Office, or the British Transport Records Office or, the library or ...

JANE:

…. local news papers

IAN:

….. local newspapers. So that was a bit that was the gift we needed. So that's where we said Margaret "Go to the library and come back with the actual source material." And that became the material that we worked on as a company to turn into the script. We didn't know which part of local history we will have selected first, except we, we knew it would be based on Wolverton, because that very intriguing, huge wall that seemed to back on to something rather important. But you don't get any daily sight of as you walk through Wolverton. And we had, we had two … several …. really important consultants help to make an original piece of local history, local documentary. We have Ewan MacColll and Peggy Seeger, the great folk singers and they became friends, and they did workshops on the song writing. And it's on the basis of that original work that the Living Archive Band still owes its … I think the quality of the songs that they sing and produce all grew out of that purity …. I think folksong of that purity that Ewan and Peggy managed to teach us. And the other one was Peter Cheeseman who is a theatre director, Victoria Theatre in Stoke on Trent. And in the 60s and the 70s he was famous for the documentary theatre he did on the Potteries, which we knew first-hand.

JANE:

… in Newcastle-under-Lyme ….

IAN:

that was when we were living in Shropshire. That was the nearest professional theatre we had. So, we went to them and became very good friends with Peter Cheeseman. And he gave us superb advice. So, when we finished our first trawl of research, we had all these box files on the shelf. And we had to decide what was possible. We didn't want to do a pageant, we wanted a drama, a play. So which bit was the most exciting news section? And it was obvious to us, really, it was 1832 to 1865 or so. And it was the coming of the railways to Wolverton. And the reason that was so choice for us was it was

the first time that there'd been a great influx of new people arriving in this patch of ground here. It was a great shock and horrified existing inhabitants and brought new cultures from all over the place into …. to be grafted onto the old. And of course, what we found in history was a replica of what we were experiencing ourselves at that very time. There's the existing people, I think 40,000 people or something. And in these villages and little towns that were sustaining this influx of incomers from London, Glasgow, Belfast, wherever people wanted a second chance, they were coming to Milton Keynes for their second chance. And so, it was an absolute gift. Because we were able to set up the place as it was before the new city - the new town of Wolverton was built. And by focusing on the Captain Swing rebellion that was happening in the local villages here, and the part played by the Duke of Buckingham up there, who could call up his Bucks Yeomanry and try to suppress the burning of hay ricks and whatever. - And there's lovely documentary evidence of all that. Including, you know, the actual words of the Riot Act that was written, spoken before, they arrested anybody. And, of course, all that went into the play. And then of course, there's the stuff of the proposal to build a railway and it would come through Wolverton and it would Robert Stephenson who walked up and down the line. So, we had all of Robert Stephenson's letters and his story. He stayed in the Cock Hotel [Stony Stratford] at a time when he'd caught a serious cold and ended up with a sort of fever, and he was holed up at the Cock Hotel. And. meanwhile, they were trying to build the embankment across the Ouse just up Wolverton way. And the guy who'd been given the job of building the embankment was having huge difficulties because he imported a load of soil and stuff from the tunnels that they dug further south on the line, and it included lots of alum shale in it, which spontaneously combusted. So, there's Robert Stephenson in the Cock Hotel, getting messages from the contractor saying he's got problems - the embankment is on fire. So, incredible dramas like that. And then of course, when they tried to bring the railway through, the canal workers saw their livelihoods threatened by the railways. So, they tried to physically prevent the railwaymen building the line, so the actual physical fights, battles, when they tried to stop them crossing the canal with the line - , physically resisted it - there were, there were huge fights. And of course, that all went into the play. And Wolverton became a kind of frontier town in those days of the building of the railway. There was a pub called Hell's Kitchen, which lived up to its reputation.

JANE:

I think it is now the Railway Tavern.

IAN:

So, but there was a lovely coincidence because, around the time of Hell's Kitchen, prize fighting was a huge sport and a huge gambling sport. And Wolverton owes... I'm now talking about when the trains were now operating.  Wolverton was the perfect spot for a prize fight, which was already illegal. But the supporters and gamblers could come up from London on the train, or they could come down from the north on the train. And so, when Ben Caunt met, who's name I've forgotten, Ben Caunt of London, fought Bendigo of Nottingham in a place somewhere near Wolverton, and it couldn't be disclosed because …..

JANE:

….. it was probably somewhere in Salcey Forest area …..

IAN:

the supporters all arrived by train, and they marauded through Wolverton, breaking windows and things like that. That fight lasted 100 rounds. And you can find, an account of this bare-knuckle fist fight.

JANE:

Roger [Kitchen] has got the whole of that document.

IAN:

You could find it in Sporting Life of 1851. It's a round by round account of that fight, it's an absolute gift to us. So, we had our Hell's Kitchen scene coincident with the prize fight event happening around. And so, the place was teeming with ….. and we have the cast of 100 teeming with the rough people. And did you ever hear of Bill Billings?

INTERVIEWER: Yes,

IAN:

Ah, well Bill was in our cast. And so, he played Bendigo, [William Thompson] the fighter and he claims to descend from Mendoza, another great prize fighter. And he looked like a prize fighter…. he had this great broken nose. And so, I remember the rehearsals of this prize fight were really fabulous. And there was another ….. there was another document that we found of a person who was traveling in this area and he was warned not to go too close to Hell's Kitchen because there was a load of trouble there. So he describes how he did decide to walk on but he was followed by two foot-pads and luckily he had a brace of pistols under his cloak. So when they came to attack him, he just fired his pistols and they ran away. That was a scene in our play.

Well, then, of course, in this play, which we called All Change!, because that's what was happening …. we have a lot of parliamentary records of the arguments about whether and how the line could be built. And the landowners opposed it and the railway entrepreneurs wanted it. So that's a lovely conflict which gave us beautiful things. I mean, the people, the witnesses, for example, it's marvellous the way they recorded everything verbatim in those days. So verbatim accounts exist of what the witnesses who were arguing for the railway said in the House of Lords enquiries. It was a Major General Willoughby, for example, who was asked about what use would a railway be to him. And he

said, Well, if we have to deploy our soldiers, he says, first of all, when we deploy, our soldiers would prefer to march and we'd love to make them march, but it would be so much quicker in an emergency to get them there by train. And, and there was a farmer who…. who complains of walking the geese and the cattle down the Highway, you know, through this area,

JANE:

… down the Watling street to the markets in London …..

IAN:

…. it wore their feet out before they got to market. And so, a train would solve that problem. And then the people who…. people who transported their glass from Birmingham to London by canal…. it would take ages days and days…. it would get frozen up in the winter. But the bargemen were so careless with the pottery that they broke half of it, so the railway would solve that problem. So, all that lovely, graphic, specific detail of what the railway meant to ordinary people, we had. In this area, we were lucky in having Northampton … we had two newspapers published in those days. One was the Mercury and one was the Herald, and the Herald was Tory and the Mercury was Whig and they had diametrically opposed views on the railway question ….. obviously the Herald as the Tory one didn't want the railway. And so, they would each print accounts of... like the Tories would report all the railway accidents blowing up in their accounts. And the delays …. the Whig people would write ….. you got letters to the editor saying that the railways will be great moral teachers, they will teach the virtue of punctuality. This they said ….. what would be the value of arriving at a station five minutes after the train has left ? ….. you'd be waving your hat at the departing train. Then, of course, the people who worked as signal men on the railways were put into uniforms, these were laborers from the farms and they have had to have their hair cut ….. had to smarten up. They had to be polite. And they had to learn strict disciplined activities like how to do the flags. I mean, oh, this was a gift to play ….. because it all went into the play.

Oh, Queen Victoria visited and...

JANE:

….she stayed at Stowe, didn't she? She didn't think much of it

IAN:

Well it was bankrupt. The bailiffs were disguised as the Duke of Buckingham's servants in his livery. So, they looked like his servants. But in fact, they were bailiffs just calculating the value of everything that they're going to acquire. But she, her visit to the railways, took her around the Wolverton railway works, every detail of it and to the local school, all documented, so that we could have our Queen Victoria. So, when, for example …. little digression here …. when they opened the new Milton Keynes station, and Prince Charles came with Diana, who was pregnant so she stayed on the train, but Charles came up onto the Concourse area ….. And we'd been asked to perform scenes from All Change! to mark the occasion at the station. So, we had 80 actors all in costume lined up on the Concourse. And we thought Charles, because he had another event at the Open University half an hour later, we thought he'd just whip through. But being Charles, he talked to all the actors as he went along the line. And then, of course, I was able to introduce him to Queen Victoria. That was a great moment. And he has a sense of humour about things like that and loved it, so he was about two hours late getting to the Open University.  But once the original Wolverton station …… Oh, the Refreshment Rooms were an absolute gift to us. That's how we ended the first half of the play. The Refreshment Room was documented, according to exactly who worked there. Four men and three boys, a laundry maid and a scullery maid and a house maid and a kitchen maid. And they're all at their proper stations, and a matron to guard their reputation. And so, there was an edition of Punch, the famous humorous magazine, came out at that time describing how Mr. Punch visited Wolverton …… took a train to Birmingham, which stopped at Wolverton. And they were given 11 minutes to refresh at the Wolverton Refreshment Room. And he says in this article that he ordered soup. And the soup

that he was given, was so hot, that the very steam of it took the skin off his face, like the skin off a hot potato. And he says no sooner had he bought the soup, and paid for the soup than the whistle went, and he had to get back on the train, so he couldn't even eat the soup. It's too hot.

JANE:

…. So, you juxtapose...

IAN:

….. so, can you imagine what a gift to make a scene after that? It became a choreographed piece of musical theatre really.

JANE:

An accumulation song wasn't it?

IAN:

Yeah, our great songwriter friend, who learned from Ewan and Peggy how to make all kinds of songs, including the accumulation song…… he wrote the Refresment Room song which is still sung to this day. And it starts by singing about who is …. how it was staffed and, when a laundry Maid was mentioned she entered and danced on …. and the food is detailed that they sold there ….. so that's all on a great table and the bottles of stout are lined up there. We introduced the character, Punch, who just speaks the words of his account …..

JANE:

…..and tries to chat up the ladies…..

IAN:

…..the idea was that if there is a matron to guard their reputation, their reputations must have been at some threat.  So, from such visitors as Mr. Punch, so in our version he became a lecherous Mr Punch really, because he would go for the laundry maid and the matron would just sweep him away from her and take him back to the food. It was all dance to the music really. And, and then he goes for the house maid and she would catch him and take him back to the food, and so on. And then finally, it ends with ”Please no gratuities; the servants are content”, when he tries to tip the people, as he leaves to get back on the train. So…. but then in the second half, you've got this amazing character called McConnell. Now have you ever heard of the Reverend Awdry,  who did Thomas the Tank Engine. He also was a railway enthusiast and scholar. And so, we went to Reverend Awdry to learn about this man, McConnell, the railway superintendent. And he was a brilliant man who created the Mechanics Institute. And he believed in educating the workforce. He wanted absolutely the highest standards of engineering possible. And we built the Bloomer engine here under his instruction. And he was the man who first understood and solved the problem of metal fatigue, because the axles of the original trains were solid iron axles. And he found by experiment at Wolverton that if you keep hammering at this iron, solid iron, it changes its chemical structure and becomes crystalline, and snaps. And that's why the axles kept breaking close to the wheel of these trains because they're getting this kind of stress all the time. And so, he invented hollow axles. And so, the vibrations of the impacts were all translated along the hollow tube, and it retained its fibrous nature, the iron, retained this fibrous quality and never snapped. And so, this is our heroic character for the second half of our play, James McConnell.

JANE:

And then when we did, well, Roger managed to get finally recognition for McConnell with McConnell Drive. That was important to have him recognised

IAN:

Yeah, having recovered McConnell's reputation, there'd be no McConnell Drive in Milton Keynes. But then, of course, the final part of story is the great rivalry between Wolverton and Crewe, where there was a different person running Crewe, a man called Moon, and McConnell was the Wolverton one.  McConnell built big engines, solid and well-built and built to last and Moon built the Watt engines which were cheap and fast. And it reflected the sort of Margaret Thatcher philosophy, you know, it’s … profit was the only thing that mattered. We need to make as much as possible for as little as possible whereas McConnell felt, We've got to do things that we can be proud of and that will last. And so that philosophical conflict can be built into our plays as well, which is very relevant to what we were thinking about as we're building Milton Keynes. We wanted quality that would last in every area, not anything cheap and nasty that 30 years later, we'd be dismantling … if possible. So that scene was well organized within the play. And Reverend Awdry gave us this detailed account of what we built as our finale, which was like a train race. And it was set at the time in 1860 something at the time of...

JANE:

61 wasn't it?

IAN:

So maybe the time of the American War of Independence? Civil War, civil war? Yeah, yeah. The American Civil War was raging at the time. And I think we have …. How does this work? There was an English ship that was arrested by, I think, the Union forces.

JANE:

Yes, I think so.

IAN:

And Confederate commissioners were taken off the ship and detained, and our government got all excited about this and said there'll be war if this these people aren't released, instantly. We will come and declare war on you. And so, the king's messenger had to bring a message back from America to London, saying that these people had been released to avert war. And so, his journey was by sea, by sailing the ship to Ireland and then a packet took him around Ireland and across to Holyhead, where he got on a Watt engine built at Crewe. Which had the advantage in terms of speed, because by the time they got to Holyhead, they had five hours left to avert war. So, let's get from Holyhead to London in five hours. And the first half to Stafford, Holyhead to Stafford, it was on a Watt engine, the advantage being able to scoop water from troughs on the line to feed the steam engine. But the disadvantage of being a Watt engine built at Crewe, so at Stafford they managed without actually stopping the trains to transfer this Queen's Messenger from the Watt engine to the Bloomer engine, and two Wolverton men, drove and fired this Bloomer engine down from Stafford. Time's running out, they go, they hit... they come out of Kilsby tunnel into dense fog. So, the timing of their speed is restricted. They go through Wolverton unable to see a thing. But they know they're going through Wolverton. And I'll tell you a story about that in a minute. And, and then, when they come to Brickhill or somewhere, the fog lifted, and they made it to 68 miles an hour or something and got to London with three minutes to spare. Now, Awdry gave us all that detail, all the timings of that, including the strength of the crosswind. And so, we went on to dramatize that perfectly, and to get authenticity. And we interviewed existing railwaymen who worked on Steam all their lives and said How do you know where you are when it's…. when there's a dense fog, for example. Because these people obviously knew that they were going through Wolverton. And they said, "It's sound, they

know from the sound  When they go through a cutting, the sound is very different. If they're going over a bridge, the sound is very different. If they're going through a station,, I can tell from the sound." So that's that ….. that's what gave us confidence in what we were doing. And that was the finale of our play with Wolverton triumphant and McConnell triumphant. But then, of course the Postscript is that in fact, they shut down Wolverton as a railway town, and making works and Crewe...

JANE:

They sent everything up to Crewe, so even in the 19th century that process had begun.

IAN:

Okay, so there's one example of how a desire to tell a story to our population and involve them in the telling of that story through being actors. And designers and all the things that you need to make a play. And ???? is researching our history, and discovering heroes like McConnell, discovering great moments like Queen Victoria's visit, discovering, you know, raucous events, like the people who created riots in Stony Stratford and got arrested for disorderly behaviour, all from documents. And then, of course, so many stories like the stories of Hell's Kitchen and so on, are the substance of a play, which you then play, you know, we play to our own community, who, if they ,….. if they were, old Wolvertonians or old Stony Stratfordians, then they were getting a reason to love and believe in and be happy about the place where they live, talking about a sense of place. And even though they were having this influx of outsiders who were coming in, but which at the same moment is saying to the outsiders, This is your story too.  Because back in the original days, when we were directing 'All Change!", you've got that  ….. we do this sequence of the Todd family who moved from the very far north looking for work and ended up in Wolverton finding work. And that's what was bringing people to Milton Keynes, work, they got work here.

JANE:

And that scene was just from the 1851 census, because you will have a man called Todd, his wife, and then you get all the children, and of course the census says where all of them were born. So, you can plot their journey southwards for work.

IAN:

And they ended up in Wolverton. So, it's a, it's like, a fountain of stories, a rich fountain of stories, that find expression in a unified way, within the discipline of a play, and the performance to the people whose story it is, it gives confidence to the existing residents. And also, a sense of belonging to the people who are coming to a new town and want to belong. They don't want to be outsiders all their life. And so, they're connected to it, because half of them are in the play connected to it. So just to complete our story, then that All Change! thing was, was hugely successful. And it occasioned, for example, a national conference here, which we held at Stantonbury Campus, which was funded by the Arts Council, but we've got people like the playwright, Trevor Griffiths, and Ewan and Peggy and Peter Cheeseman, and Charles Parker, the great documentary pioneer, and all to make contributions to a weekend conference. And I was the chairman of it. And I also was a participant in the sense that I was going to use documents and demonstrate how, in the course of that long weekend, these documents could be transmuted into a piece of theatre. And so, I asked Roger who I had got to know by that time, because he'd been to see All Change! and was impressed by it if he had any local history documents that he'd collected, that I could use for this purpose. And he gave me the Albert French letters, which you've heard of, okay, well, so I used those in the conference. And then we're so excited by what we produce there that I came out of the conference, and then wrote the play properly. And we performed it 10 times at Stantonbury. And, and it subsequently got revived a few times over the years. But that, that story of a boy of 16 who came from our Wolverton , it was such a moving story, that, and it made a perfect piece of theatre, because it's got a structure of being recruited, it is all entirely made from the letters. Not a word is changed or added. And I just selected and juxtaposed in ways

that make theatre. I don't know if you'd be interested, but I just, I just described an extremely simple way in which those documents can be turned into drama. You look at the words on the page, say in Albert French's letter. And you say, you ask yourself, Who, What, Where, When, Why …. do you know that? Finally, Weather ….. if you like, is it raining? And the Who gives you the characters Where gives you the location, the place The What gives you the action And the When gives you the time, time of day, time of the month and whatever And what was the other one.

JANE:

Why!

IAN:

And Why gives you the motivation, essential ingredients for theatre. You're directing a play by Shakespeare, you want your actors and your designers to answer all of those questions. It works. I mean, you've got a letter from a boy to assist us …. what you've got. And he's saying, My, my friend says, I don't look 18 or you know, or something like that. So, then you've got two characters, Albert and his friend, and What? And what's his friend saying? You don't look 18. So the dialogue comes off letters naturally, into the mouth of real people that are referred to - the sergeant said this, or the sergeant did this. There is the action. And suddenly, we were able to tell the story from his recruitment, to his training, to his arrival in France, or Belgium, at the front, and then his getting killed. And you finally got two letters which were included in the collection, one from the chaplain, and one from the captain of the regiment, who said exactly how he died. So, he was building a parapet. And you know, you got …. you got words and the letter saying, He's with his mate still there next to him. He's building the parapet with sandbags. And things that he's written to his sister saying, I'm going to be a major general one day, he says to his mate, as he's building the sand bags. Very ironic because the next minute he's going to be dead. He says in the letter somewhere, You're supposed to keep your head below the parapet because of the snipers and so on. And, and, and he fails

to remember that at that moment.  He looks over, the bullet hits him. And our actor of course is doing this, his friend is there. And, and then the rattle of the machine gun, and then he just turns around, he puts blood all over his face, and he turns and falls. And then a beautiful song. And, and the songs are stories, which are created from the documents, and they're not so meticulously verbatim-exact as the dialogue can be. You will allow yourself some liberties when you're doing lyrics for the song, but they're incredible songs. And so, when we've done Albert, and again, that was another success. And, and, and clearly Roger was a great person to have on board.

JANE:

He was a great researcher.

IAN:

And we then wanted to do the big war play. And Roger by that time had been interviewing this man Hawtin Mundy, who is the greatest local storyteller of all.

JANE:

I edited his book.

IAN:

In one of these stories, Hawtin tells the story of his first kiss? And it's an absolutely beautiful story. And it’s so complete in itself and how he got to know her, got to admire her, got to fancy her, got to speak to her, got to go for a walk with her, and how he dared to hold her hand. And that moment of Should he?  Should he not? Kiss her and all that, and it's a beautifully told story.

JANE:

It was to hold her hand "Did he dare, did he dare" he didn't even kiss her - that's what makes it so extraordinary!

IAN:

But it's such a beautiful thing that Songs of Praise, asked us to re-enact that story. And our daughter Lucy played the girl. And Allan Thompson played the boy, Eric Thompson's son, and they were dressed in lovely costumes of the time and they re-enacted that whole thing, which included them walking along the canal. So, Hawtin is the true, most wonderful storyteller. He had totally authentic language. And, of course, when we did the war play, half of it must be the words that he spoke to us. Half of this spoken text of the actors must have been Hawtin's words. And course, the rest came from local newspaper account. There's an amazing sequence in it. In Days of Pride, we called it, where the women in McCorquodales went on strike for equal pay with the men at McCorquodales at a time when half the men were fighting the war in France and Belgium. And so, there's this amazing spat in the newspaper columns of the soldiers saying, What the hell are you doing? You know, you're arguing for two shillings a day. We're up to our necks in mud for a shilling a day and we're in danger of getting killed every minute. What are you doing back there making all this fuss? And there's this leader of the women was Sis Axby. Not a suffragette formally but one of the great feminists, I think, of local, local fame, who answered the soldiers in a speech that she made to a crowd of women where she said, You know, we've got to make our stand, we've got to have equality. And, and yeah, there were girls who followed her and supported her and were slapped in the face by their mothers and told to go home. Just thought that everybody learns about the suffragettes at school. But this is an incident where it erupted into action. That makes wonderful drama. And so that was, that was part of our home front sequence. And we had warfront sequences that we got from Hawtin. And it made a great play well, though I say it myself, maybe it was, because I give credit to people like Hawtin who gave us...

But it was such a gift to be able to make into a play. And then of course, Roger's research and my drama skills, were the perfect combination to do a whole sequence of these things and others came after. And that's our story really.

JANE:

So, there's just one little bit to add on, that is Theatre of Fact, there was one story... Have you heard of Theatre of Fact? Theatre of Fact was a professional theatre-in-education, national theatre-in-education company, which went around all, around the country, funded partly by an Arts Council's Project Grant, which were available in those days. And "The Hungry Grass" was the first one we did outside our own resources really because we used All Change! and Albert and the Days of Pride stuff for the first two or three plays with this professional company, really to get it going. And our original company wrote "So Clear in my Mind" and "In Trouble". But the first time we used outside writers, who wrote was it? Was it Lin?

IAN:

Lin Coghlan wrote "Starving For Justice" and...

JANE:

"The Hungry Grass" is the one I wanted to talk about, "The Hungry Grass". Gwenda Hughes was the director of both of those. I've heard in the last week their names on Radio 4. Lin Coghlan was the Saturday play. Yeah, and Gwenda, of course, every now and again, she goes in and directs The Archers. Because she was really a super director. But "The Hungry Grass" was a fascinating play because it was a situation... it was dealing with the Irish population in Milton Keynes, wasn't it? And it was really trying to teach the Irish kids….. we've had so many coming in from Belfast, and all

around….. their history and the fact that they were not being treated well, if I remember rightly, do please correct me. They were getting the usual stuff of being Irish and you know ……

IAN:

So, the heroine of that play was a girl who denied being Irish.

JANE:

She was a Milton Keynes young lass, wasn't she?

IAN:

But she meets an old woman who is Irish, and she is a bit suspicious of her at first, but they eventually get into conversations. And the old woman tells her five stories. And now they're all stories of Irish history. And like one is Drogheda where Cromwell sets fire to a church with the whole population of that village inside.

JANE:

And one of my favourite ones was of the navvies, the Irish navvies, the navigators coming to build the railway through, and that scene was actually done totally in Irish. And the kids would just sit and listen. Because the old woman would kind of semi translate it...

IAN:

for the girl …..

JANE:

…. and therefore, for them.

IAN:

Every story she told the girl we obviously acted as a drama.

JANE:

But that was wonderful, and they were women navigators, there were some women who dressed as men and joined that, you know, just the same as some women went to sea.

IAN:

But “The Hungry Grass” was one by Lin , where she was basically invited by us to make... because we tried to do plays and workshops that are related to the topics that were outside the scope of teachers to cope with, they were too controversial. So, Ireland at the time of the Troubles was very controversial.

JANE:

That one was done in 1985. So, you can picture when that was happening over there.

IAN:

And so not only was a play made, but...

JANE:

….. including the workshop it was a three-hour programme, including the play.

IAN:

...it would go into school. And we would have three classes in succession, doing the workshop, which was a workshop on the issue. And it was like dramatization of the issue. Well, I'll tell you a little bit about the first one we ever did, which was based on the Hawtin Mundy stories. And our professional actor was playing Hawtin Mundy, a blind man. And when the class first arrived into the hall to see ….. , join the workshop, they were met by this blind man, because Hawtin was blind, and surrounding him we put up all these posters saying, What did you do in the war, Daddy?, Your Country Needs You, and all that. And so, the kids would come in, and there's the blind man. And eventually, a conversation starts. And he asked them, What can they see? And they start to describe these posters, and he says, What do you think they are all about? And it's all about getting them to understand and think what lies behind the propaganda. And so, the subject of cowardice crops up. They had in the workshop…. you get ….. you get the kids to do an enactment of a scene, where there's a firing squad, killing, shooting a coward. And I'm actually, I'm not remembering everything as it was, as I used to. It's been a long time. And the question is, when the kids have got the gist of it, like Augusto Boal's methods, you know, you can freeze the action. And then you can question, you know, what's in your ….. what's in the minds of the soldiers who are shooting their friend, and then freeze the action of what's in the mind of that guy who's about to be shot. And the professional actor taking this role of the soldier about to be shot says, I didn't, I didn't deliberately run away, I was just confused. It was noisy, it was full of smoke. And I just, I just ran, I didn't know, I wasn't running away. I could have been running towards the Germans. And, and then, but you know, he was shot anyway. And then ….. so it raises the question of Who's the hero? Who's the coward? And those enactments were all part of the workshop. But then, when we came to do a play, it was a complete, crafted play, which contained all those issues, and spoken through art. But the kids, three classes have had the workshop, and then they

were the audience for the play. So, they were so highly tuned to read the play and understand the play ….. feel empathy with the play.

JANE:

I think you're right. I don't think "The Hungry Grass" actually did a workshop in that way. I don't think it did.

IAN:

Maybe that one didn't.

JANE:

Because I think we started after that with a more complete professional company, including writers, designers and outside directors . Sometimes, as we say, there were three classes. Sometimes there was only one class, if the school could only afford one day ….. that was actually a bit of a problem with the schools. It was a three-hour workshop. So the experience that one group got was fantastic. And there was hot-seating, there was absolutely, you know, all of the techniques, techniques that they use. And then but three classes could come back into the hall for the play. You can't do a workshop with more than 30 kids - it's impossible. That company (Theatre of Fact) lasted from basically from 84 when we started it until we finally closed it in 91.

IAN:

We did about 10 or 12 plays,

JANE:

One or two of them are other people's. We did Belgrade's “Raj” …. No, it wasn't Belgrade's, it was Leeds TIE “Raj”, we did Belgrade's "After You" about rape.

IAN:

Otherwise we created new plays and …..

JANE:

….. and all sorts of things that are really hard, difficult subjects and have… you know, there was a whole circuit in those days. There was Theatre Centre and there was Watford TIE. There was Royal Theatre TIE at Northampton, Belgrade TIE in Coventry, Leeds TIE, and us. And a lot of the actors moved between the companies.

IAN:

Merseyside TIE …..

JANE:

…. and Greenwich TIE, which was ever so important in your development with what you wanted to do because we discovered they were doing a version called “The School on the Green”, which could only be one thing “The Burston School Strike”. And we knew we put on a play on this subject . And we thought, Wait a minute, What's this, you know, and you asked if you could go and see it. And he went along, and he came back absolutely gobsmacked.

IAN:

I was transformed by it because I thought they ….. they….. they admitted they been inspired by our play. And that's why they did it. But the play, "The Burston School Strike" tells the story of the strike. But when I went to see what I thought was their version of my play, rewritten, it was something else. I arrived, you know, as the only adult in the audience, as a member of a class of children. And into this classroom came the characters from the Burston School Strike. I say, the vicar comes in and speaks to the kids and intimidates them. And the teachers have their say, and, and it's like ….. that's an amazing, amazing moment where Mrs. Higdon is in front of the class, and she's saying that … she's telling the class one of the children in the class has died. And this is a boy that was constantly being dragged out of school to pick up stones by the farmers or to scare crows, or whatever. And he was living in a house without heating and which leaked. It was a house owned by the farmer or by the church and badly maintained. And the parents were paid very little money for their work and so they were living in poverty, weren't eating properly. He had no boots to come to school. So, in the snow he'd been walking without shoes to the school. And he only had walked into the school because Mrs. Higdon broke all the rules and lit a coal fire against the governors' orders in the classroom.

JANE:

That's just one of the reasons they wanted to sack them.

IAN:

And I mean, this is all material from The Burston School Strike. But in this version it's the teacher, Mrs. Higdon, telling us, the class, about this little boy who's died. And then she says, Do you think you'd like to say goodbye to him because he's still lying in his house? And then she thinks, What do you think you can say to his mother? and then the kids will work out what they might say. And then, as we left the classroom to go around the hall and around the back corridor and back to visit the boy's

mother, a kid took the flowers off the nature table. It was that kind of event. And so, we arrived at the place where there's a coffin on the table, and there's another dialogue between the teacher and the mother. And then Mrs Higdon says, Would you like to say goodbye to the boy? and she lifts the coffin lid. And as the children are about to look in, she slams the lid down and says, This should never happen. It should never have happened. And then she lists all the reasons why it's happened. And it was like, TIE, it was like……, and what we had done was community theatre, I suppose. But they distilled it to pure education. And, and I knew how to make a theatre company…. a TIE company, came out of that. I knew exactly what to do. And that's how we created Theatre of Fact.

JANE:

It was very exciting at the time. and the Stantonbury kids got all of them. And they all saw that stuff.

IAN:

Yeah. And we have the Catholic Church just up the road. As our creative hub for our development. So, no costs.

JANE:

You know, that was the point. It was hand to mouth. But we managed to do it. You know, because people were so good at sharing the cost of it with the Arts Council would give us 25,000 Quid for every one of our things. And we would earn 25 …..

JANE:

Yeah, the Borough Council would give me some……

IAN:

……the schools would pay some…

JANE:

….. the Development Corporation would give us a bit ….

IAN:

…..and places like Hampshire, which was so enlightened about Drama in Education, would buy it. They would buy for 60 schools, and we'd be there for three months.

JANE:

THREE months?

IAN:

Well, three weeks. The drama adviser in our days was Marigold Ashwell. And she just bought everything that we created. Oh, she was Berkshire.  The point was that, if you have a well-trained actor/teacher company, they are skilled in precisely that.

JANE:

They are teachers and they're able to act.

IAN:

And I just want to talk about two or three interfaces.

JANE:

How are we doing on our questions?

INTERVIEWER:

We've answered the first one, but that's okay. It was good, as I said it’s perfectly welcomed that we can go off on a tangent.

IAN:

There are a couple of interfaces, though, which are worth just mentioning. I mean, when teaching drama in the classroom or on the stage….. And in the Sixth Form we were teaching Theatres Studies at Stantonbury. It was possible to create plays that you're studying. So, we actually did all of the Checkov plays and Brecht plays and so on. And we were able to take our kids away for a week at a time to a village hall down in Gloucestershire, and just do 12 hours a day work on a play. So, to lick them into superb shape, then bring them back to Stantonbury and have that wonderful theatre, and design the plays for that space and so on. And Shakespeare plays or whatever they are, but if they were on the syllabus at A level, then our sixth formers produced them and acted in them perfectly. You know, the whole, no bowdlerisation. The entire text powerfully presented. So, the kids’ experience within the curriculum is one thing, but then they can become part of the Youth Theatre. I started that with Peter Terson’s, Zigger Zagger. It’s a football crazy, wonderful play,

JANE:

And Caz was in that!

IAN:

Caz was in that; you talk to her about Zigger Zagger. But that, that Youth Theatre went on for years to other great things. And then they can, they could join the community drama group and do the documentaries, or that drama group having learned….. ordinary people learn how to act and how to do all sorts of things through the documentaries that they didn't know what they were getting into when they joined. I was terribly excited because it was a local subject being done. And yet the next thing they might do is A Midsummer Night's Dream or something ….. or, you know, Trevor Griffiths's The Comedians or something like that. And so, they found themselves …. and we did the entire nine hours of Nicholas Nickleby, the National Theatre versions of Lark Rise and Candleford that Bill Bryden developed in the Cottesloe in those brilliant days. We did the three Mystery Plays, The Nativity and Passion and Doomsday and that …. and without any compromise. I mean, the climax of Doomsday involved the construction of a gigantic Ferris wheel with actors inside it being spun round and the Day of Judgment with God up there on the swing and… and Christ, Christ on the other side, and watching the earth come to an end. And you know, I mean, these were incredibly ambitious undertakings that would never have been within their scope or capability, had they not had an experience of the documentary plays, and got introduced into it like that. I'll tell you a story. When we were doing, about to do …. embark on Days of Pride, I knew we needed at least a dozen actors, men who, who could be convincing soldiers marching and things like that. So, I thought I saw the Morris dancers, the Stony Stratford Morris team dancing at the front of The Crown. And I went out there and told them that there was going to be this play. And I actually was …. the first time like, I contacted them was for Burston, wasn't it?  Because I wanted to finish Burston with this riot of festivity.

JANE:

I know you used them in the second ….

IAN:

Oh, yeah, that's right. I didn't use them until the second play version of Burston. Yes. Right. So, the first time of meeting them was for Days of Pride. So, I said, Would you come in and be soldiers, be the soldiers or …. or dance a Morris dance at some point? I don't know why, why I said, but they all came along, thinking they were Morris men in a play. And I issued them with rifles and told him that the first scene was 13 regiments that were arriving in Wolverton for their manoeuvres …… that training before the First World War in 1913. And, and each regiment would be composed of a Morris dancer dancing a Morris step, leading a horse with a soldier riding the horse, followed by a regiment which were puppets that were soldier puppets that were dangling from these poles and then 13 of these things came on to this music that Rod Hall had composed or adapted from a traditional tune. And so we filled the stage with these regiments, 13 regiments and it was, it was at that point, we introduced Hawtin Mundy who had to cross the road with his mate, Sid Carroll. There the road was blocked into Wolverton works by these regimental soldiers going past the entrance to the Works. And he makes a dash for it. A mounted soldier hits him with a truncheon and, and that was our opening of Days of Pride. And these guys were well into it, you see. Of course, then they just played the soldiers, and they all became great actors, some of them supreme actors.

JANE:

One of them was Derek Gibbons who does so much around town now. He was…. that was a revelation to me.

IAN:

He'd been a Morris dancer.

JANE:

That's what I'm saying.  He…. One of the Morris men was Derek.

IAN:

And Julian Drury and Brad Bradstock. These people were priceless members of our Community Theatre Group.  So and then we'll be doing Nicholas Nickleby, The Mysteries or something. These are the same blokes who'd been the soldiers. Who'd been the Morris dancers who we found in the square. So…..

JANE:

….  Bob Adams was another.

IAN:

….. And the students from the campus were automatically immersed with... the 30 kids, aged 12, or something from Mrs Higdon's class. And so, they were Foundation Year kids at Stantonbury, those kids in that play. The sixth formers, were all in Nicholas Nickleby in various parts. And when we did the Tempest, we multiplied the sprites, and they were children, so they were always intergenerational, cross generational casts of very large numbers. Every Sunday, we worked all day, we worked Monday evenings, Wednesday evenings with adults and then Sundays were the whole families. And they were wonderful creative days. Well, whole families like hundreds of seem to be milling around, but on the stage always in focus. Or making stuff in the back. And that interface was with storytelling, because we had we had a spate of wanting to create a centre for storytelling Milton Keynes. And we'd been inspired by a very close friend, a chap we've worked with in America when we were over there called

Odds Bodkin and he's a great a world-famous storyteller. We bought him here and that was 84 as well

JANE:

That was a hell of a year.

IAN:

We fixed him up with 60 schools to visit and take his stories into 60 schools in the county, the whole county. So, Odds did his storytelling with simply a 12-string guitar and himself. And he's an imposing character with a big beard and lots of hair. And he told amazing stories, which are all right up your street. So, I'd love you to listen to them sometime.

INTERVIEWER: I would be delighted.

IAN:

In 1960, there was no drama and schools. And we just happened to be amongst the first who were practising it. So, our promotions were rapid. I mean, within three years, I was head of drama at a comprehensive school. Because there were so few people doing this exciting new work. And I think storytelling, when you get people who believe in it, and understand it, and know why they're doing it and know what they're doing, how they're doing it, then it can only in the end, make inroads to discovery.

**Additional answer written by IAN & JANE post interview:**

IAN grew up in Brighton and JANE in Northampton. IAN had 4 years at St John's College, Oxford University and JANE 3 years at Bedford College for Women, London University. We met in Italy when we were both on a National Union of Students Fine Arts tour. We married in 1962 and moved to Maidenhead so that IAN could teach English at Sir William Borlase's School in Marlow and JANE could continue her work in London as Personal Assistant to the Editor of a publishing firm, George Newnes Ltd. It soon made sense for JANE to train as a teacher and get a job at a Maidenhead Junior School.

Since IAN's primary interest was Drama and Theatre in Education, we moved to Market Drayton in Shropshire in 1965 where IAN became Head of Drama and JANE taught a "remedial" class alongside an 'A' level course in Economic and Public Affairs at a new comprehensive school.

Drama was a new subject in schools in the early 60s, so IAN was soon head-hunted and came to take up a post training teachers in Drama at North Buckinghamshire College of Education, sited in Bletchley Park, in the days when the wartime work at Bletchley Park was still shrouded in secrecy. JANE got a job teaching in the Primary School at New Bradwell and we came to live in Sundial House in Stony Stratford, which is our home to this day. This was in September 1967.

Our first impression of the place then, apart from love at first sight of Sundial House, was that Stony Stratford was a market town in steep decline. Day and night, vast numbers of heavy goods vehicles trundled through its High Street, part of the Watling Street. The town was in desperate need of a by-pass. Its housing stock was in a state of decay. Residents looked to Northampton for shops, many services and a hospital. In fact, we could afford to buy a house here only because prices were 1/3 lower than equivalent ones in Bletchley and the surrounding villages. Wolverton and New Bradwell were an anomaly – railway towns with a tone and feeling that was more akin to the north of England than to deep blue rural Buckinghamshire.

North Bucks College in Bletchley was a single beacon of hope but the surrounding schools where IAN's students did their teaching practice were dull, uninspiring places, resistant to fresh new ideas,

lacking in vision or ambition. The whole area stuck on the northern tip of the ultra-conservative county of Buckinghamshire was desperate for the revolution that would come with the Open University, the Milton Keynes Development Corporation and Stantonbury Campus, which were all infused with the kind of optimism and courage that had their seeds in Atlee's Labour Government and were personified by Jennie Lee. At this stage the great changes that the new city would bring to the area were still a twinkle in the eyes of a few people!

Our next move, in July 1969, was to the USA, where we worked from the base of an international summer camp in New Hampshire, a land of forests, lakes and mountains. Our primary mission there was to set up and run a programme for teenagers called Crossroads America. The idea was to test how much learning could be achieved through direct experience. It was a kind of school without walls. America was the classroom; and the students lived together in groups of up to 10 for up to10 weeks at a time, camping and travelling the length and breadth of the USA. Intensive living and working opportunities were pre-arranged for them in native American reservations, Chicano communities and Appalachian coal-mining communities. There were also stays with Amish families in Pennsylvania and visits to ranches and vineyards in California.

After demonstrating the efficacy of this kind of learning in the first year of the programme by leading one group ourselves and co-ordinating 5 others, at the end of the summer we published an anthology of the poetry, prose and drawings made by the students as a reflection of their experience and a diary kept by one of them. In subsequent years, we doubled and then quadrupled the number of participants and managed the whole thing from the camp in New Hampshire, where we also helped out with the activities of a different and mostly younger group of students (about 120). JANE timetabled all the activities and attached each young person to the classes they chose to do; usually three or four different classes a day for at least 3 days at a time. IAN taught Drama classes.

In 1972 we returned to England where IAN found work as Director of Drama at Wanstead High School. We lived close by in Woodford Green. Meanwhile, we still owned our house in Stony Stratford from where news reached us of the plans to build, in the emerging city of Milton Keynes, a new education campus, comprising 3 secondary schools, a community college, a leisure centre and a

professionally equipped theatre. This was Stantonbury Campus and IAN got the job of Director of Drama there, while JANE raised our daughter, Lucy, looked after our home and worked as an assistant to the director of the Milton Keynes Language Scheme, which help Vietnamese and Bangladeshi newcomers to the new city to speak English.

The overall Director of the Campus was a visionary educator called Geoff Cooksey, who gathered his team of key teachers long before the buildings were up and ready but in time for us all to design an enlightened curriculum fit for the future and in the spirit of how the Milton Keynes Development Corporation wanted the city to grow. Geoff gave 2 members of his team the title of Director, along with complete autonomy. One was Hilary Davan Wetton, who taught music in the school; set up the city's Music Service centred in the rooms that were backstage of the theatre; the Milton Keynes Chorale, a community choir; and the Milton Keynes Chamber Orchestra, a professional orchestra which grew into the Milton Keynes City Orchestra. The other was IAN, who was Director of Drama; taught in the school; set up a Youth Theatre; a Community Theatre; a centre for documentary arts (Living Archive); a professional theatre-in-education company, called Theatre of Fact; and eventually took over full responsibility of managing the theatre as Milton Keynes's principal venue for professional touring theatre and dance, as well as school and community productions of music, dance, theatre and opera.

The Development Corporation (MKDC) initially paid IAN's salary with a view to his role within the development of drama and theatre in the city as a whole. This was to have significance right through until the day IAN finally retired in 2000. To give an example of how it worked: some time in the 1970s MKDC asked IAN what kind of theatre should be built as part of the City Centre profile. The answer then was to take no action yet on that front but to use any available resources as investments in the grass-roots initiatives that were already underway in various parts of the designated area. The time would come when the population would be large enough to make such a City Centre Theatre viable and, by then, the efforts of Stantonbury, the OU, Woughton Campus and the Jennie Lee Theatre in Bletchley would have built an audience with an appetite for whatever such a new theatre could offer.

The time arrived early in the 80s. With MKDC's support, IAN created the Milton Keynes Theatre Development Company. After a lot of work, the project was fully developed. £20 million of Lottery money, £7 million from the Commission for New Towns (MKDC's successor) and £3m raised from the community was enough to launch the building of what we now have in Central Milton Keynes – a Theatre and a Gallery.

Prominent early achievements at Stantonbury Campus included a series of large-scale documentary plays, which started with 'The Burston School Strike' in 1975. The success of this play prompted MKDC to commission from IAN a new documentary play about Milton Keynes in 1976. He used his entire fee of £2,000 to pay a researcher for a year. He also engaged the help of Peter Cheeseman (the then director of the Victoria Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme in the Potteries, and the outstanding exponent of documentary theatre in the UK); and Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger (joint revivalists of the folk-song tradition in this country) who trained our local musicians to write original songs in the folk tradition.

One great help in this project were the local history books about Milton Keynes written by Sir Frank Markham. He provided excellent footnotes to his texts, which located his source materials in places like the Bodleian Library in Oxford, the House of Lords Records Office, Bucks County Archives etc. So we despatched our researcher to these places on a mission to bring back verbatim copies of the original documents. This was to satisfy our determination to create a text which was edited solely from primary source materials, so that the actual voices of the people who lived through the historical events could be heard directly from the mouths of the actors playing them.

The following piece of text is IAN's introduction to the play, 'All Change!', when it was published by the People's Press in 1977:

Milton Keynes: The City's Past

So proclaims one of the posters designed to attract newcomers to our new city. To carry the point, the picture is a colour photograph of the Sundial on a house in Stony Stratford, bearing a Latin inscription and a date: 1739. This new city has a past.

It also has a community theatre. When it first opened, I wrote in a programme note: "Stantonbury Theatre exists for us and belongs to us. We are the community in the phrase, Community Theatre'. The community is all of us: men, women and children. Anyone who lives near enough to the theatre to call it their own, whether born here or just moved in, can count on it. Our theatre is built. It's in our midst." I ended up by trumpeting forth: "Stantonbury Theatre is your theatre, at the heart of your community." And I meant the people of Wolverton as much as the people of Walton Hall.

From the day I first moved into this area, ten years ago, I was struck by the unique character of Wolverton and New Bradwell. What lay behind the formidable wall along the Front? What was the story behind the grid pattern of the streets? Who were the people who built the foundations of this town? What were their motives?

When the new city came along, the questions had a sharper edge. What was it like to be a newcomer moving into the new railway town of Wolverton from 19th century Glasgow or Liverpool? What was it like to be a resident of Bradwell Village and see unfamiliar buildings sprouting in the fields nearby and strangers with unpredictable ways, walking the new streets?

The poster with the Sundial stresses the picturesque side of the new city's past: the Roman and Saxon remains, the Georgian and Victorian buildings in Stony Stratford. It does not feature Wolverton. Yet I have long felt that if we could unlock the doors to Wolverton's past and make it live again, it would speak to us in a way that would heighten our consciousness of our own lives and develop a deeper understanding of the lives of others.

I know of no better way of doing this than through documentary theatre. We have gone to the roots of Wolverton; found out from primary sources what actually happened in the first thirty years of its existence. Local historians pointed the way. Old residents delved to the back of their long memories,

affording us glimpses into the past, including what their fathers and their grandfathers had told them. These people gave us the flavour.

The language we have used was never spoken or written with a view to being reproduced by actors on a stage. The words have the power and immediacy of utterances from life.

Our creative function has been to organise our materials into a coherent story line; finding the juxtapositions that reveal the conflicts, the humour and the pathos of people's lives.

From the start, our project attracted people from all walks of life to come and share their skills and resources. In Stantonbury, the walls have never been up between school and neighbourhood; children and adults have collaborated to meet the challenge of bringing all our discoveries and insights into early Wolverton into sharp focus. Our job now is to communicate the result as vividly as we can in theatrical terms, live. We hope you will enjoy sharing this experience with us.

The success of All Change! provoked East Midlands Arts to stage a National Conference on Documentary Theatre at Stantonbury in 1980 with IAN as its Chairman, and Peter Cheeseman, Charles Parker (who made the BBC's Radio Ballads with Peggy Seeger and Ewan MacColl), Trevor Griffiths (the playwright) and IAN conducting workshops and presentations. IAN asked Roger Kitchen, who independently was collecting and recording the memories of local people, if he had any documents IAN could use as workshop materials at the conference and Roger gave him the letters of Albert French, a boy soldier from Wolverton, who had signed up for the First World War aged 16 and who met his death in the trenches a week before his 17th birthday. They were perfect for demonstrating to those attending the conference the techniques for transmuting primary source materials into dramatic text. Unsurprisingly, IAN emerged from the conference and wrote and directed our 3rd documentary, which was called Your Loving Brother Albert.

This occasioned the start of a productive relationship between Roger and IAN. Together with JANE, who acted as Development Officer, in 1984 they created the Living Archive, a Centre for Documentary Arts, originally based at Stantonbury, which continues to this day. These days it's located in Milton Keynes Museum.

Albert was followed by Days of Pride, the story of Wolverton in the First World War both at home and on the front; The Jovial Priest, the story of a notorious local vicar in New Bradwell and the story of his relationship with his congregation; Sheltered Lives – Wolverton in the 2nd World War; and Nellie, which told the story of the lives of local women in the 1st 20 years of the twentieth century. In the late 70s, the 80s and the 90s we were presenting a local musical play each year, often a new original documentary one, frequently a revival of one of the earlier ones.

There was a period when, to satisfy the numbers of people eager to be involved and the range and depth of the skills they had developed over the years, we presented a series of 5 major productions, originated by our great national companies. We started with the National Theatre's trilogy, The Mysteries (Nativity, Passion and Doomsday); moved on to Lark Rise and Candleford; and rounded them off with the Royal Shakespeare Company's Nicholas Nickleby, all 9 hours of it, which we presented in 4 parts over 30 nights of performance.

The focus of this interview should be the way that stories have been used in our work to help give a sense of place to our community of Milton Keynes. For example, our rationale for choosing Lark Rise and Candleford was that Flora Thompson had written about life in a village and a town, situated only 15 miles from Milton Keynes. She could easily have been writing about Great Linford or Stony Stratford! We chose The Mysteries in response to the Milton Keynes Christian Council's request for us to create a documentary play which would celebrate their ecumenism.

The All Change! project began with our selection of a span of time between 1830 and 1870 and the town of Wolverton as our place because it provided such a perfect parallel with what we were all experiencing in the 1970s. A new town was being built to accommodate the railways; and a massive influx of people from outside was transforming everything the mid-19th century residents were used to into something different.

We found evidence of how the Captain Swing rebellion impacted on our local villages and how the Duke of Buckingham deployed the Bucks Yeomanry in an attempt to suppress them. A riot at Wavendon, where the Development Corporation was later to make its home, was all over by the time

the Duke's officer put on his elaborate uniform and his boots, before mounting his horse to pursue the fire-raisers.

It was the Duke of Buckingham, the area's biggest landowner, whose opposition to the railways prevented the line passing near Stowe, which caused it to be diverted through Wolverton instead. His son, the Marquis of Chandos, was more progressive and became Chairman of the London North Western Railway.

Meetings at local inns, such as the White Horse in Towcester and the Swan Inn, Leighton Buzzard, brought officers of the LNWR, such as Robert Stephenson, the chief engineer, plus shareholders and vociferous opponents of the railways into the same room for the liveliest of exchanges, all accessible to us verbatim from letters, Stephenson's submissions and newspaper reports.

When the Railway Bill came before the House of Lords, verbatim accounts exist of exchanges between totally unsympathetic cross-examiners with, for example, a merchant whose experience of using the canals to transport his goods from Birmingham to London were fraught by stoppages due to frost and ice. The coaching companies refused to carry his goods due to their excessive weight. The director of a glass company also suffered from delays and breakages and losses from pilfering when using the canals. A lieutenant-general who, though he would prefer to march his troops to battle, in cases of emergency would prefer the speed provided by rail. A farmer, who had to drive thousands of sheep and cattle down the Watling Street from Leighton Buzzard to the London markets, suffered huge losses from damage to their feet. They all saw the railways as the solutions to their problems. The Lords, on the other hand, as landowners themselves, opposed the railways and responded to the conclusive evidence of the entrepreneurs with absolute prejudice and threw out the Bill. It took huge bribes before they eventually gave in and the line from London to Birmingham was allowed to go ahead.

Robert Stephenson walked the entire line many times and his letters gave us all the details. For example, laid up at the Cock Inn in Stony Stratford with a cold, having experienced intolerable weather in the Wolverton area, he was visited by his contractor, commissioned to build the Wolverton

Embankment. He brought the bad news that the embankment had suffered spontaneous combustion and gone up in flames. We staged the massive dispute between the railway companies and the canal companies, who had everything to lose, in the form of the nightmare experienced by Stephenson in his fever of a pitched battle between canal navvies and railway workers.

We had a stroke of luck researching the two Northampton newspapers of the time. One, the Mercury, was Whig and supported the railway; the other, the Herald, was Tory and implacably opposed all forms of progress. The Herald was eager to publish any complaints against the railway and the Mercury proffered arguments for their benefits. So, we found entertaining material, for example, about a porter dropping a hatbox and spilling the hat and the inspector's riposte that it was not the porter's job to pack people's luggage. Against the so-called abuses of the railway, the Mercury preached how they could be great moral teachers. They enforced the splendid lesson of punctuality.

The completion of the line would seem to have merited a financial bonus for the men who built it but Stephenson thought it unnecessary and fobbed them off with a few barrels of beer and some beef to eat.

So many of the documents we obtained contained such vivid details that dramatization was not difficult. For example, the exact procedure for communicating signals by means of red and green flags; a punch-up in Stony Stratford which caused labourers from Wolverton Station to be hauled before the local assizes; a highway robbery outside Hell's Kitchen, a notorious Wolverton pub crowded at the time of a famous prize-fight between Ben Caunt of London and Bendigo of Nottingham. All their supporters had used the train to get to Wolverton for the illegal bare-knuckle fight that lasted 100 rounds and took place in a nearby field. This was Wolverton's 'wild west' and these were Wolverton's frontier town days.

We found details in the 1851 Census of one man's entire family, which gave us a clear case of the population drift from the north towards work in Wolverton.

Primary source materials were equally valuable to our song-writers. For example, a vivid account of the categories of person employed in the Wolverton Refreshment Room and the food and drink sold

there combined beautifully with an 1845 Punch description of Mr Punch's attempt to drink hot soup before his train departed. With this as source material, choreography and comic invention fell into J Cunningham's accumulation song as though the scene had always existed.

The beginning of the second half of the play was built from a detailed description of Queen Victoria's visit to Wolverton: the town, the railway locomotive works, the allotments, the library and the schools.

Wolverton's locomotive superintendent was James McConnell. Before our play, there were streets in Wolverton named after Glyn, Moon, Leadsam and Creed, all prominent in the LNWR. But there were none to mark the work of McConnell. There is now a McConnell Drive that runs past Milton Keynes Museum, where the Living Archive is now based. We were indebted to the Rev. Awdry (author of Thomas the Tank Engine) for access to many papers on McConnell, which gave insights into his childhood, his early apprenticeship and employment before coming to Wolverton; his contribution to scientific and engineering journals and his subsequent career as the Superintendent at Wolverton, where his famous 'Bloomer' was built. No play is any the worse for having a hero and McConnell was ours.

You can imagine how gruesome details of a train crash at Wolverton Station were covered by the Northampton papers. McConnell's progressive ideas were sometimes resisted by the men who worked for him. They went on strike once and threatened another.

Meanwhile, to meet the need to house the expanding population and to circumvent the problem of the Radcliffe Trust's refusal to sell any more of their land around Wolverton, farmland was acquired at Stantonbury and that's how we got New Bradwell.

Few things enhance a sense of place more than an intense rivalry with a different town and such a rivalry existed between Wolverton and Crewe. McConnell came into conflict with a new breed of railway entrepreneur. Richard Moon, in charge of Crewe, represented something of a new philosophy in the industrial development of 19th century England. His loyalty was to the shareholders and their

demands for quick returns on their investment. McConnell's Bloomer, although cheap to run, long-lasting and efficient, was expensive to build.

The Times newspapers gave us contemporary reports which had a remarkable connection with our story. It provided us with our grand finale, which we called The Trent Dispatches. The detail we needed came from Moon's and McConnell's letters, which are kept in the British Transport Records office.

The conflict between Moon and McConnell, between profit and engineering pride, is symbolised in the story of the Trent Dispatches. The Rev. Awdry had collated 3 different accounts of the historic train run from Holyhead to Euston, carrying the Queen's Messenger with news of a climb-down by agents in the American Civil War and their release of a British frigate and its crew. That event had threatened war between the UK and the US and there was a time limit for the message that would avert it to reach London. Moon gave the Times newspaper a biased press release but Awdry's research discerned the truth about it, which is of a quite different complexion.

In fact, the superiority of the Bloomer engine's performance when compared with the little Watt engine built at Crewe is quite clear. The Watt carried the Queen's Messenger from Holyhead to Stafford and the Bloomer took him the rest of the way from Stafford to Euston, where he arrived just in time to avert war.

We struggled with this sequence in rehearsal. Arthur Grigg, a local veteran driver of steam trains, came to rehearsals and brilliantly recreated for us in his words 'a steam locomotive's journey from Stafford to Euston, mile by mile, with changes of weather built in.' He also guided our actors on exactly how the engines would be driven and fired. It was Peter Cheeseman who advised us to alter our style of mime away from the manner of Marcel Marceau, who makes visible what is not there, and put the focus of the audience's attention rather on what could be seen. So we stopped trying to mime the controls or the shovel and emphasised effort in face, shoulders, arms and backs. That improved it. Then we allowed nothing in the scene to detract from the focal point of the narrative line

and the scene suddenly began to get the pace, excitement and momentum of the train ride. When the choruses were sung, the action in focus was the vigorous mime of the train crews.

Though our phase of Wolverton's story ended on a moment of temporary setback, when engine building was transferred to Crewe, we did get everyone on stage at the finale with a last chorus of the All Change! theme song. Its note of determination to pave the way for a better future was appropriate to the mood prevalent in Milton Keynes in 1977 as the new city got underway.

The collection of local stories, either from historical documents or personal reminiscence, was the basis of all our work in documentary theatre. The examples selected above from our first large scale local musical documentary play could be matched by an equal number from any of those that followed. They all contained fountains of stories about local people, their personal experiences and details of local and national events they were caught up in.

The scripts have their value still, of course, but in some senses they are like the shell of a firework. The real excitement, colour, sound and spectacle is experienced when the fuse is lit and the plays are performed in front of live audiences. It is a fact that dozens of the songs from these plays are still being sung by The Living Archive Band 40 years after their original life in the first productions of the plays. Most of these songs have just been published in a new book by the Living Archive of Milton Keynes songs, which includes the lyrics, the sheet music and the documents and photos on which they are based. A copy of the book now rests in every school in Milton Keynes.

As important as the artistic product of all these projects was the involvement of hundreds of local people of all ages, who participated in their production, as musicians, dancers, song-writers, singers, actors, designers, technicians, scenery builders, painters, props and costume makers, ticket sellers, box office managers, front of house staff, publicists, sponsors; and thousands of people who bought tickets and came to watch them. The retelling of all those stories in a coherent, dramatic and entertaining form brought residents, who predated the city of Milton Keynes, together with the new arrivals and affirmed for them all their sense of place.

**Q2. What do you feel has changed the most in Milton Keynes?**

IAN:

When we arrived, it was mud…..

JANE:

…..it wasn't even mud. They hadn't dug up anything when we first arrived.

IAN:

They were building the infrastructure. They were… when we first came. I know when we first came, we just came to Stony Stratford and there was some stuff over in Wolverton and New Bradwell, and Bletchley and Newport Pagnell out there.

JANE:

Yeah.

IAN:

And Olney a bit further, and there was no building. So, what's changed is this enormous enterprise has become a reality.

**Additional answer written by IAN & JANE post interview:**

Most obviously the size of it and the density of it. From 4 separate towns and 13 distinct villages, we have been transformed into one great city with a splendid centre; our own hospital; a thriving

business community;  a superb theatre, gallery and museum;  the prospect of a new university;  and, at the same time, the individual parts have largely kept their identity.

**Q3. What, if any, qualities make Milton Keynes unique?**

IAN:

Creativity, daring, courage, vision. Community. No, I mean, we know it's got its darker side. It's got its problem estates …. we know all about that. I don't think that has to be. And I mean, we've got a Labour-controlled council that I think is hopefully trying to do something about those problem areas. In terms of thinking positively about Milton Keynes, that's the list.

JANE:

I would add, collaborative, very collaborative, because we started very small with a small group of people. We've all gone outwards and we all, you know, all of these clusters are still in some way, linked.

IAN:

Bottom up.

JANE:

It's very much a bottom-up kind of thing. But I think that… that… that says we you keep….. you mentioned, community. I think that community collaboration is the thing…. it's…. You go to other towns….. When I actually grew up in Northampton….. I can't even bear to go there ……

IAN:

….. except for films…..

JANE:

…..except for films, but that's on the edge. I don't, I don't have to go into Northampton. And it was so spiky, so nasty.

IAN:

Northampton seemed insular in those days.

JANE:

So perhaps that's what I'm saying. But Milton Keynes sort of is itself. And it's goes outwards - always. And I know, many people probably would ….. wouldn't say that. But certainly, we as old timers can see that growth. And we can see the connections. There's so many different connections at different levels.

IAN:

Yeah, look at Stony Stratford, and what's it called, Stony Words…..

JANE:

….. in seven venues over 17 days or something like that. Extraordinary for small town.

**Additional answer written by IAN & JANE post interview:**

Its youthfulness. The Development Corporation itself was composed of astonishingly young men and women and the city has a population very much weighted towards the young. Although that is shifting to some extent in that we do have a significant elderly population now, the city has retained its youthfulness, its modern outlook, its energy and its positive forward-looking mentality.

**Q4. What would make you proud to live in a place? (Do you experience some of these elements in living in Milton Keynes? What could improve your pride in living in Milton Keynes?)**

IAN:

To feel that we're contributing to its life? And its future? I mean, that's a historical answer, really, because we are past it now. We're in retirement. And we just enjoy the fruits of all the work.

JANE:

Yeah, we're both 80, so you know, we have to say that we, we hold off a bit now these days, and we come up when we've got energy, and then we go back and get a bit more energy.

IAN:

Somebody says, Can we do an event tomorrow in Stony? I say, Yeah, go and ask Caz. and that's what we do now. We say, Well, there are people that are younger than us.

JANE:

I think it's big. If I feel that I belong, therefore, I'm needed. And it's something that you want to be part of, isn't it?

IAN:

And have many friends?

JANE:

I mean, yes. So many friends, this is such a great place.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel some of those elements in Milton?

IAN:

I mean, for us, it was the perfect place to come to because everything had to….. was there to be done. It was a tired place. It was a drab place, those days.

JANE:

It was an empty canvas basically

IAN:

Everything was just waiting to be done. And so, and then to have something that's as wonderful as Stantonbury Campus as a facility to work from…

JANE:

….And the fairy godmother...

IAN:

... the Development Corporation.

JANE:

I won't have a word said against them.

IAN:

…. and the Open University born at the same time, growing up with us.

JANE:

That's right.

IAN:

I mean, these worlds, incredibly enabling.

JANE:

And so many of our friends worked there.  They're retired now.

INTERVIEWER:

What do you feel could improve? If anything, your pride in living in Milton Keynes? Is there anything that you think there's an even better?

JANE:

Yeah, I think we would like to, I'd like to see more money. I do think you…. some things need money. One of the most brilliant things about Milton Keynes and the Development Corporation was the way in which they pump-primed stuff. So, they put a little bit of money to give you the chance to do something, you could then go up, make it up to this one. And then you could get up your….

IAN:

To give an example of what JANE is saying, she used to be the Consultant to the Milton Keynes Foundation, she'd be advising them, for example, having got to know and nurtured some artists, that this artist would benefit from £3000, to have time and space to develop this next exciting phase of work.  After 20 years of having retired from that kind of work, they asked her to come back.

JANE:

What they did was to ask me what it was that we did in the early days, how did we spend our money because this is a Milton Keynes Foundation for the arts, which was set up by the Development Corporation. And a bit later on the Community Trust was set up but it didn't have an arts wing because of the Foundation for the arts. It didn't have an arts wing, it was all social development, and, you know …..

IAN:

……charity.

JANE:

So, I got them to get together. And then we became the arts wing of the Community Trust and eventually when we saw they were doing it well, okay, we disbanded. And they became the Community Foundation. The original Foundation did fantastic development work.

IAN:

I think we want to flesh out the good things that Milton Keynes thrived on but which have become emaciated with the reduction in funding, and it now needs to be bolstered.

JANE:

The Community Foundation is about the only decent funder of anything in the city. The borough council has no money, the former regional arts associations have no money, nobody has any money and all of the Foundations like Paul Hamlyn and all of those kinds of things, they're just swamped with requests, there's no way in which you can get anything. That's what I would say.

IAN:

My answer to your question is to make sure we don't …. we don't again, betray the original concept of the Development Corporation for the architectural scope of Milton Keynes. For example, the Midsummer Place disaster, that ruined Midsummer Boulevard, I think was a tragedy really. And any temptation to destroy the grid system, for reasons of profit making or whatever. I would like for Milton Keynes to keep its faith…. faith in its enlightened original concepts.

**Additional answer written by IAN & JANE post interview:**

We are immensely proud to live in Milton Keynes. When IAN was in a position to influence the choice of names for the new Theatre and Gallery, he argued strongly for Milton Keynes Theatre and Milton Keynes Gallery, when there were other voices suggesting, for example, the Lady Diana Theatre! The greatest source of pride is the fact that we were free to put all our energies, talents, skills and effort into the making of the city; and for 50 years we have enjoyed the benefits. The way to improve it would be now to protect the original values which formed it against any kind of cheap and nasty commercialism. We should remember James McConnell and the Bloomer engine!

There was a time under Margaret Thatcher when the city's development seemed under attack from a Government that couldn't cope with the progressive nature of a city that had such self-confidence. She closed down the MKDC but by that time, thanks to the foresight of the Corporation, all of the infrastructure for a great city was already in place and the momentum was unstoppable.

**Q6. Has Milton Keynes played a part in helping you gain any achievements which you might not have been successful in if you lived elsewhere? Has it aided any failures?**

IAN:

Yeah, we've had successes in other places, particularly in America, where our artistic work flourished on the grand scale. But what Milton Keynes enabled us to do was to apply everything that we learned to do well, on a large scale, without any inhibitions or constraints, really,

JANE:

At this point, I should probably just say, that, I don't know if you know what my role has been. But basically, IAN was director of drama at Stantonbury, and in his spare time he did all of these things. I've always felt that my role was when he had an idea, it's my job to make it happen. So, in other

words, to help finance it and to administrate it until it reached a point where we could pass it on to somebody else, and I did that with Living Archive, and Theatre of Fact, and all sorts of those things.

IAN:

….and the theatre …..

JANE:

….. that's right, and I administrated Stantonbury Campus Theatre. So, I think I would not probably have done that, I would probably, if it'd been anywhere else and become a, you know, a PA to somebody or whatever. Because my skills and training, definitely, of management and admin…. I'm only happy I've been able to do it in the arts. And being very happy I've been able to do it with IAN.

IAN:

And in the context of building a growing city, so we'd always move sideways and be part and parcel of what was going on. And what was the big Milton Keynes idea.

IAN:

Because it was such an empty landscape. It wasn't exactly empty, of course. But because it was a relatively empty landscape to begin with…. so our colleagues in the Development Corporation were putting, planting, the trees, parks, creating the Parks Trust and planting the trees,….you get the Cathedral of trees and things like that. And houses were being built and roads were being built and the landscape was being peopled. And these people were being welcomed.  All this was happening. And within that context, we were able to provide education initiatives, which are tailor-made for the…. for

the place, and artistic possibilities that were kind of beyond the scope of everything that happened before.

JANE:

And I think the fact of the designated area, and you've got these pieces in place and there's all this space in between… I think there was space in order to be able to do whatever it was you wanted to do. So that you never really had the feeling, one never really had the feeling that you're treading on anybody else's toes. There was always, wasn't there, there was always, yes, there were some people who have felt it, you know,(treading on their toes). But I think, when they got to know us, they realized that we weren't actually doing that. But in fact, there was plenty of room for them to do their thing and we wanted them to do it. Do you think?

IAN:

Absolutely.

JANE:

That's fair to say.

**Additional answer written by IAN & JANE post interview:**

None of the highlights of our professional careers would have occurred had we not felt ourselves to be significant players in the birth and growth of a new city. For example, we will cite an unforgettable moment at the end of our production of The Burston School Strike when history fused with the present, art with life, and the old with the young on the Stantonbury Campus Theatre stage.

Ian had created the play from documents and from having had the privilege of meeting a number of people now in their 60s in the village of Burston in Norfolk, who when they were children had gone on strike in protest at the sacking of their teachers. Mr and Mrs Higdon's only crime had been to have introduced progressive child-centred education into a conservative county, dominated by wealthy landlords and farmers and the power of the Established Church. It was a strike that lasted from 1917 to 1939, supported by Trades Unions all over the country. A Strike School was built on the village green and is there to this day. Our cast of adults and children had gone to Burston and performed many of the scenes from the play in the locations where the events had originally occurred; and for the final matinee at the end of a week of performances at Stantonbury, two coachloads of the 'strikers' came to see the play and sat in the front row of our theatre-in-the-round. The opening of the Strike School was a scene of great celebration with Morris-dancing, maypole dancing, the singing of 'England Rise', speeches and one outstanding speech, which we collected verbatim, which was given by Sylvia Pankhurst to the vast crowd. The final speech was by Violet Potter, who aged 13, had started the strike and who now had the honour of announcing the opening of the Strike School.

At this point in the action our young actress playing Violet reached out to bring the real-life Violet Potter on to the stage and they stood side by side when the words were spoken again: 'I declare this School open; to be for ever a school for Freedom'.

This is one of a huge number of examples that we could give, where our flesh tingled with pleasure at the awesome power of such an event, which belonged entirely to and was an expression of the spirit of the new city of Milton Keynes. It really was a 'can-do' place!

It was events like this which gave us our professional profile and opened the door to a whole series of future successes of a similar nature.

**Q8. If Milton Keynes was a person could you describe them and the type of 50th party they might have?**

IAN:

It's a teenager. I mean our Milton Keynes was a teenager. Because of the sense of adventure, the sense of possibility, the sense of everything to be discovered and everything to be...

JANE:

…. lack of respect for what was tradition, tradition…..

IAN:

….. or at least not exactly a lack of respect for tradition but the city. The city was going to...

JANE:

…..do what it was going to do …..

IAN:

……what it can do, in defiance of anybody who tries to stop it.

JANE:

You could do anything in those days.

IAN:

Anything is possible. And we'll all do it together, we'll form a gang. Well, I'm a bit… I'm 80 years old. So, I'm in a phase of my life where I look back. So, a 50th would be a resume in celebrated form,

in performance form of the best of Milton Keynes over the 50 years. And the present would be the new Gallery.

Well, in about 1984, we set up a Theatre Development Company with a view to getting a theatre built in the centre of Milton Keynes. The Development Corporation, when they paid my salary initially to be at Stantonbury, called on me to give advice on anything to do with theatre. And so way back in those days, days in the early days, the early 70s, they said, What kind of theatre do you build to complete the city centre profile? And I had to say, Don't build the theatre yet. We've only 40,000 people. And this is not the time to do it. Invest in the grass roots. And to make sure that they believed me completely, I got my friend, Gordon Vallins (who had worked with me at Bletchley Park at that Teacher Training College., founded TIE at Belgrade, Coventry….. He was the founder of TIE (Theatre-in-Education) in this country) …..to do a consultancy report on what we needed for a theatre at Milton Keynes, and his lovely report reinforced my view that you don't build a building yet. You just invest in street theatre, in grass roots, Open University Theatre Company …. you…. and then get the grassroots powerful. And then when the time comes, and you're ready, you build your theatre. So, come the 90s we've got….. we've got….. we think it's the moment, there's like, kind of, approaching 200,000 people, we've got a fantastic amount of experience of making theatre and audiences loving it. So, it's going to be right for a new theatre. And we get Branson to put up the money to build it. And it's going to be built where the Point is, but then Branson falls out with his fellow financiers And although we've modelled the theatre and everything's ready to go, it collapses. But we stay in there with the Company. What can…. you got Kevin Whately on the Board and people like that to give us product profile. And we win the Lottery, we get 20 million from the Lottery, when the Lottery comes around. We were among the first people to get any money at all. That 20 million was enough to get 9 million from the Commission for New Towns, that's 29 million. We only needed 33 or something. At that point, I handed the chairmanship of the company over to Sir Peter Thompson, who was capable of raising three million, which he did, and I became chairman of the Theatre Committee part of the company, which was about employing Ambassadors Theatre Company (to manage and programme the Theatre).

JANE:

They weren't Ambassadors then, they were called Turnstile.

IAN:

Their getting the Milton Keynes showcase theatre was the basis of their becoming the Ambassadors that now runs the whole world of theatre. But to set that off, a year before we opened the Theatre, when it was just still clad in scaffolding, I project managed the production of Oh, What a Lovely War! in Campbell Park, in three great Marquees, by the National Theatre. And it was done in March. And we said to the population of Milton Keynes, Look, you're getting the National Theatre, this quality theatre in Milton Keynes in tents, but, just look over there! That's where you're going to get it in a year's time, in a wonderful new theatre. And so that built a huge profile of extra people, in a database of people who love theatre, which we gave to Ambassadors, which was the basis of their box office. And it went from strength to strength. And then I became Chairman again, after you know, when it was up and running, for a few years. And that's …… the great thing was we thought we're going to build a theatre. And then it suddenly occurred to Pauline (Scott-Garrett) at the Council….. that we also needed a Gallery. So, we've got these….. We added the Gallery to our profile and fundraised enough to cover that. But of course, it was just those two cubes that we've been familiar with. And I'd always wanted to continue with the work and get a producing theatre built into Milton Keynes as well. And but it was not to be…. there wasn't the money.

JANE:

Well suddenly the money went with the financial crash.

IAN:

Yeah. But in time, we found a way to build at least another new Gallery, which is fantastic. So, that's my present, my 50th birthday present.

**Additional answer written by IAN & JANE post interview:**

A precocious teenager on the brink of adulthood.  Something like the International Festival run by The Stables.

**Q 10. Do you think Milton Keynes has a good reputation a. internally with its residents, b. externally with the rest of the country? (Why do you think it has this reputation? How does that make you feel? What could improve it?)**

IAN:

I think it's got the first definitely, the people who are not happy with everything are people who are stricken with difficulties that are not easy to overcome, like poverty or lack of resources of one sort or another. But most people are very, very happy with Milton Keynes, I think.

JANE:

One of the things, I think, shows that …..people from outside ….. if anybody really says things against Milton Keynes, everybody in Milton Keynes gets together and they say, ….. they gang up against what's being said.

IAN:

That's the second half of the question, which is how does an outsider view it, and I think that situation is changing. I mean, they have made fun of Milton Keynes and been scared of Milton Keynes, because of its newness, and its….. what they perceive as brashness. And they, based on total ignorance of the place…… outsiders have made jokes about Milton Keynes. Even this week, I heard somebody on the radio advertising a comedy program that's coming up tonight or something……

JANE:

….. oh, was it, is Mark Thomas coming here?

IAN:

I don't know. But she is a woman, it’s a feminist, feminist late night comedy programme. And, and, and she thought it was okay to say, three things, she said, we are going to be the source of comedy and presumably meant the butt of jokes. She mentioned Milton Keynes. And that is so passé now, because the world has woken up to the recognition that Milton Keynes is a fantastic thriving success story. And they wished, they secretly wished that their place was anything like it.

JANE:

And I'd like to finish off what I was saying…… And that is, one of the things that you could say is that our kids come back to live and bring their children. So, they go away, they get educated and then an awful lot of them come back here to live. That's an extraordinary thing.

IAN:

The new Gallery will be another demonstration of how thriving it is

JANE:

The first exhibitions this year, are going to be fantastic.

IAN:

We've always understood that we've never done anything except in great teams of people. And JANE made the point about collaboration. Everything we've ever touched has been collaborative. Theatre by its nature is collaborative. That's the joy of it. And so, we don't take, I don't want to have given the impression that we take particular personal credit for anything that we've described. But we hope that the city can take credit for it because it contains people who work together in that wonderful way. We learn from other people. And we have had people join, I mean, we mean, the musicians that joined us, the artists that joined us, the dancers that joined us, all give substance to what we wanted to do, which is perform in this wonderful place.

**Additional answer written by IAN & JANE post interview:**

Yes, we do think that residents love the city with only a few exceptions. Outsiders have suffered from ignorance and prejudice in the past but, as more and more evidence emerges of the success of Milton Keynes at the hub of the Oxford-Cambridge link and its strategic location half-way between London and Birmingham, even they have reluctantly begun to admit their admiration.

The opening of the new Gallery in March 2019 and the stupendous reception given the first two exhibitions finally clinched its reputation as a successful city, an example to others across the world.

We feel good about this. The important thing for the future is not to spoil it by radical departures from the original MK vision. It will improve as it continues to grow only if resources keep pace with the size of the population.

IAN & JANE

Date: 8/3/2019

Location: Interviewees' sitting room, Stony Stratford

Observation: Both Ian and Jane have had a powerful impact on the development of Milton Keynes especially in terms of its arts and heritage and this was borne out by their wealth of knowledge and their enthusiasm to share it. They both appeared relaxed and incredibly open about their experiences. This interview took three hours as both, but especially Ian with off on tangents to the questions. However, I allowed these tangents as they were filled with stories of Milton Keynes heritage.

Ian and Jane constantly interrupted or corrected each other – whilst this was not a particular issue within the interview process when it came to their member checking they felt embarrassed, wishing to write up instead and for the transcription to be disregarded. I returned to discuss the matter and assured them that I would disregard the transcription if they felt it was absolutely necessary, but that the stories they had told within the interview had been incredibly valuable to the research. A compromise was achieved by including both the written and transcribed answers as have been presented here.