

“Ferryman” Jack Hedley forces his wife to leave the house

British TV star JACK HEDLEY, who can be seen in the repeat of the TV series “Who Pays the Ferryman?” has very little in common with romantic hero Alan Haldane on the Greek island of Crete. The actor is entangled in divorce proceedings with his wife JEAN and summoned the mother of his two children to leave the house.

The series “Who Pays the Ferryman?”, currently being repeated on Dutch television, had a fatal effect on the cast. The four months they spent on the sunny Greek island seven years ago resulted in huge marital problems. The TV series wrecked the marriage of four couples, caused several attempted suicides and the crew were confronted by two bloody murders.

Lead actor Jack Hedley, who plays the part of hero Alan Haldane, has also seen his life change drastically. After a marriage which lasted sixteen years he is now involved in a nasty divorce procedure with his wife Jean, mother of his two children James (9) and Jonathan (12).

The divorce caused much commotion in the UK, especially when he served his wife with a summons to leave the house, which he had inherited from his mother, within 28 days.

Jean Hedley however refuses to leave the home she shares with Jack and disputes his rights as owner of the high-priced premises, a five-bedroom house in Eaton Square, one of the most expensive residential areas of the city of London.

Innocent fools

“My family life is in a state of complete chaos at present,” the actor grumbles, who describes his two sons who attend an English boarding school, as “innocent fools”.

Spouse Jean, who works as a secretary at the exclusive St. James Club in London, accuses Jack of attempting to drive her from hearth and home and disrupting her life.

Jack Hedley says “ the summons was only meant to confirm my legal position.” Since he returned from Crete seven years ago his marriage has been slowly crumbling. He has only spent several months in the disputed house over the past four years.

Hedley, who fought in several wars as a marine and later became an actor, says “I am not really made of the stuff that goes into the making of an actor. Playing at the National Theatre or anything like that is not my cup of tea. I need the excitement that comes with travelling abroad. I have always been a lonesome traveller, an adventurer.”

His wife seldom hears from him when he is away filming for months on end. Although Jean is not exactly the prototype of the average house wife – she was assistant producer of the film “The Longest Day” where she met Jack and later took up car racing - she could no longer take Jack’s continual moving in and out

of her life. And Jack took no trouble to hide the fact that he liked the occasional fling with other women during his many trips abroad.

Strange behaviour

Jack, who has starred in thirty TV series and twenty films, does not look much like an actor.

In the tailored suit that he wears during his meeting with PRIVE he resembles a successful businessman. He is very much at home in one of London's best restaurants and the after the waiter has escorted him to his regular table he tells us about his experiences during the shooting of "Who Pays the Ferryman?"

He says: "They were four incredible months. There is something strange and mysterious about these Greek islands. Especially Crete. When the cast arrived on the island they suddenly started acting strangely. It was almost as if other beings had taken possession of their personalities. They were no longer themselves.

One man walked into the sea at midnight and said he was going to swim to Cyprus, 700 kilometres away. Another man fell madly in love with a girl who did not return his feelings.

As a result he tried to commit suicide by jumping from a hotel window.

During filming four married couples broke up and three people were so obsessed by mounting jealousy and passion that they threatened the lives of others and had to be sent back to England prematurely.

Vendetta

Jack Hedley blames the difficulties during filming on the island itself. "Conditions there are still very primitive, especially in the mountains where the way of life has barely changed over the past thousand years. The people still indulge in bloody vendettas. Two people were killed as a result of these vendettas during the filming of "Who Pays the Ferryman?"

A girl, who was sitting with her knees pulled up on the doorstep of her home, was stabbed to death by her father because a man who was passing by had called out to her "Hey Maria, I can see your pants". Because of the shame she had brought on her father he stabbed her.

On another occasion when Jack Hedley was eating in a restaurant in Crete, a man at the table next to his started shooting at the ceiling with a rifle.

Hedley: "At first I thought they were just blanks until I looked up and saw the bullet holes. Those bullets were real."

In real life Jack Hedley bears a strong resemblance to the many characters he has portrayed.. He joined the navy at the age of seventeen, built up a career as officer and had fought in seven wars by the time he was 27.

Bullet puts an end to naval career

He says: "Slowly I began to realise this was not what I wanted from life. When we had to return to Israel from Cyprus with shiploads of Jewish refugees I decided to quit the navy."

Shortly afterwards, in Malacca, fate and a Japanese bullet put an abrupt end to his naval career. In 1953, when he was a lieutenant, a bullet ricocheted off the butt-end of his rifle and hit his kneecap. "The medical examination was like a scene from a film", Hedley continues.

"The doctors who examined my knee and told me this was the end of my career opened the door to the balcony and disappeared, leaving me alone with my grief. Little did they know that I was standing outside laughing aloud because for me it was a happy release."

As an actor Jack Hedley has always been the odd man out. "I find most actors a sorry lot and I don't have many friends among them. Most of my friends are business people. Acting is not an art, it is just an interpretation, an actor does not create anything. That's why most of them are so short-sighted."

Hedley worries mostly about all the money that is being made illegally from films and TV productions that he worked on. The fact that he saw illegal video cassettes of "Who Pays the Ferryman" on sale in many places in South Africa makes him furious.

"Who is going to pay me?" Hedley muses. "I don't get to see a single penny."

**Translated from Dutch to English by Anna Pereboom
for the Michael J Bird Tribute Website**

<http://www.mjbird.org.uk>