



**University of  
Sunderland**

Brennan, Tim (2009) English Anxieties. [Show/Exhibition]

Downloaded from: <http://sure.sunderland.ac.uk/id/eprint/1274/>

**Usage guidelines**

Please refer to the usage guidelines at <http://sure.sunderland.ac.uk/policies.html> or alternatively contact [sure@sunderland.ac.uk](mailto:sure@sunderland.ac.uk).

# Viewpoint

A Paper for  
independent  
comment

Editor  
Rob Eason

Issue 466  
August 26 2009



The Staff Club is dead.  
Long live the Staff Club!

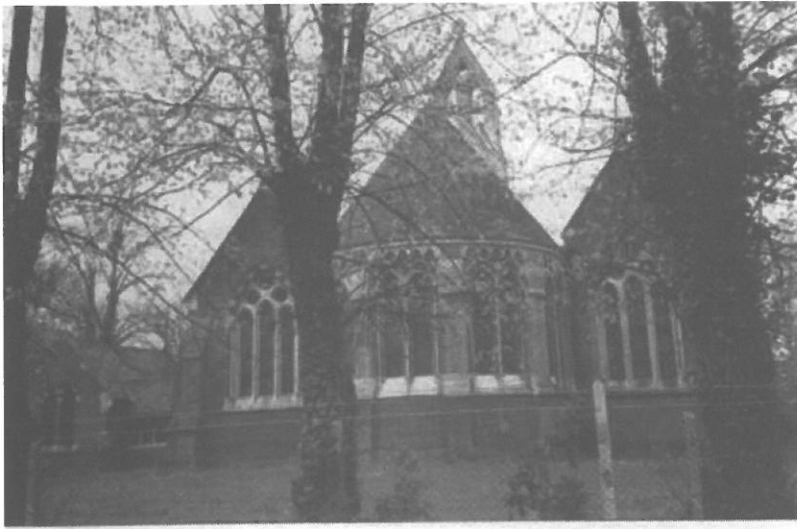
*With thanks to Gemma Barrett for the inspirational Blakeian Phoenixical theme in this leader cartoon. For the eagle-eyed amongst you, see if you can locate the sneakily hidden staff club logo, and, if you hail from Wales, there is also a regional variant on display here. Wherever you come from however, this really is the swan-song for the Staff Club. A Phoenix/Eagle/Swan song. Now there's something to conjure with.*

*Continued on page 2*

---

## **Situations Vacant**

Viewpoint is on the look out for new members of the Editorial Board. All members of the University are welcome — academics, staff or students. If you would like to find out more, please contact any current member of the Board, or the Editor. Contact details are on the back of every issue.



## From the Golden Age

Robin Ward, Triple Harp

*By Jonathan Suter*

On 30 July the international harpist Robin Ward played a wide selection from the 17th century to the present day, including pieces by Trabaci, Froberger, Buxtehude, Parry, and Glinka, amongst others, in the magnificent Victorian setting – a George Gilbert Scott building – of St. Denys Church, as part his 2009 tour. Robin's mastery of the instrument, and his commentary on all the works he played, brought the programme to life.

Originally from New Zealand, Robin is currently based in the



United Kingdom, touring around the country. He is an unusual musician, in that he both builds and plays his own instruments, and is one of only a handful of people in the world who play the Triple Harp. In February 2009 he released his first solo CD, *No Pedals Attached*.

The Triple Harp is so rare that Robin had to start off by building his own instrument and ultimately teaching himself to play it. He is the first and to date the only New Zealander to hold a Masters Degree in Baroque Harp.

Robin's initial training was on the Pedal or Orchestral Harp, under the guidance of Carolyn Mills at the Victoria University of Wellington. Through his studies Robin worked with various regional orchestras and was Principal harpist for the New Zealand National Youth Orchestra in 2000 and 2001. Robin has established himself both as a harp teacher and instrument maker and has performed as a soloist and as a member of ensembles throughout New Zealand, Australia, and the UK.

*For more on Robin please see his own website,*

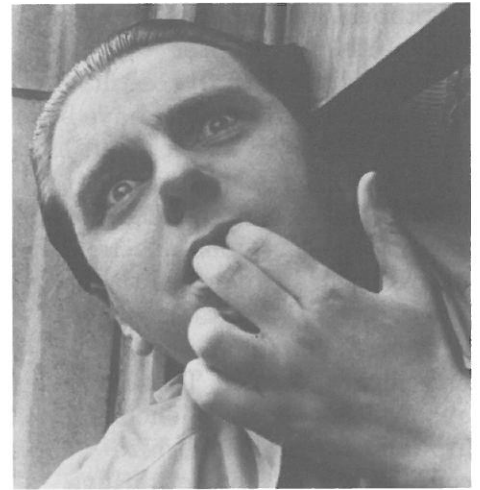
[www.earlyharps.com](http://www.earlyharps.com)

*and his profile, on*

<http://uk.youtube.com/user/seb25arpa>

*and see more about events at the church see*

<http://www.stdenys.com/>



*Tom Harrison feigning fear of The Blitz, 1940. Mass Observation Archive, University of Sussex*

## English Anxieties and Hidden Country

The John Hansard Gallery

6 July to 29 August 2009

*By Spectator*

*They may be tramps, or members of some social uplift movement, but they are everywhere among us, and they are a menace.*

Thus, in paraphrase, the Cambridge archaeologist T C Lethbridge, writing in 1940. Lethbridge was much troubled by the prospect of a German invasion of the Fenland; he was already aware of a plan prepared by Hitler to invade through East Anglia so as to form a German line across to Gloucestershire and thereby sever London from the then industrial and productive heartlands of northern England and Scotland.



*Mass Observation Archive © Tim Brennan 2009*

*Continued over page*

Lethbridge's anxieties, irrespective of his later entanglement with the occult, UFOs, and the like, may have been well founded, but he set about his investigations by spotting what he thought were highly significant assemblages of minor objects, like discarded rail or bus tickets and cigarette packets, together with marks or ciphers on walls and telegraph poles. These were apparently random phenomena around the Cambridgeshire countryside, but for Lethbridge they constituted coded messages between members of a Fifth Column helping a German invasion.

Today, such interpretations, and the near-paranoia that often inform them, evoke thoughts of McCarthyism and its many successors, including Islamophobia (remember the ban on trade union membership imposed at GCHQ at the behest of the US government in the early 1980s?). The way Lethbridge expressed his concerns might seem somewhat *outré*, but Tim Brennan's exhibition *English Anxieties* brings out both the concerns and some of the atmosphere of the Cambridge University of the time, overwhelmingly populated as it was by male-educated men of the upper classes. Brennan has, in a sort of philosophic echo of the period, also displayed his own schematic maps of the area around Cambridge, based on the Isotype representational system propounded by the positivist and Vienna Circle member Otto Neurath.

Brennan's show draws upon the Mass Observation archive at the University of Sussex, where the fruits of the idea that we, the ordinary people, are the best researchers of a period or way of life, are stored. He has assembled clippings from the popular press of the 1930s and wartime, as well as original archival material, and, not least, a collection of paintings by miners at the Ashington Colliery in what was then Northumberland; the group, who enrolled with the



Denis Coslett, taken from the Dyfed Powys Constabulary court files, 1966-68.  
Courtesy of the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth

Workers' Educational Association for a class in art history but learnt painting instead, gained substantial critical acclaim.

Tim Brennan's show is well accompanied by Russell Roberts's *Hidden Country*. Motivated in part by bitter resentment over events like the flooding of the Tryweryn Valley for a reservoir, the campaign for Welsh secession from the Union turned violent, and the photographs here – taken in police surveillance – were

presented as evidence at the trial in 1969 which effectively put an end to the Free Wales Army. This show reflects another form of engagement with nationalism; though the nationalism here is much more crudely explicit than that in the Lethbridge material, the depiction carries similar elements of the covert and the shadowy. Enjoy your encounter with both exhibitions.