

## **JACK HEDLEY**

### **Alan Haldane in “Who Pays the Ferryman?”**

Jack Hedley, the British actor who scores especially well in military parts, made a name for himself in the Netherlands six years ago due to his role in “Who Pays the Ferryman?”

Now 54 years old, Hedley played the part of Alan Haldane in this series, an Englishman who fought with the resistance in Crete during the Second World War and was known locally as Leandros.

A true story. As an ex-marine, who fought against the Germans during the Second World War, it was easy for Hedley to live the part.

“Six years ago already? No, longer. The film shooting in Crete took place in 1976. The BBC re-released “Who Pays the Ferryman?” in 1980. So you people in Holland are watching it for the second time as well? That’s nice.” Jack Hedley’s first reaction to my remark that we in the Netherlands are enjoying “Who Pays the Ferryman”, in which he plays such a prominent part, en masse once again.

No doubt it holds fond memories for him, this “fire-eater” who has spent most of his acting career playing military parts.

Despite the fact that it was eight years ago that he was in his “beloved” Crete, it seems like only yesterday that he was there for the film shooting.

“Not only because I felt very much at home in my role, but also because Greek actress Betty Arvaniti was such an excellent co-star.”

**Yes, OK, so that’s why.....**

“No, no, I know where you are heading but I shall have to disappoint you. Betty is a lovely girl but there was nothing of that nature between us. I have been happily married for years.”

### **Trial**

**Sorry Jack, that is not what I meant. I was under the impression that you would like to live in Crete.**

“Who wouldn’t? The basic commodities, like bread and wine, are dirt cheap, and then all that sun. A far cry from our musty, damp climate in England. During the three months we stayed in Crete I was also saved, happily, from phone calls not to mention tax assessments. On top of that I hate getting all dressed up. In England that is a real trial. It nearly always rains so you can hardly go anywhere without a raincoat or at least an umbrella. And looking around, all you see is pale, indifferent faces. It gives me the creeps.”

Jack says that he is convinced that the poor climate is the reason most Brits are so bad tempered.

“Why I am still not living in Crete? Two boys who go to school and a wife who has a job in London keep me pretty much tied down. There is no other way. But I live on memories of Crete, it has become my second homeland. Those who have never been there are missing an awful lot. No, not because of the wine, it’s often bad and ouzo can give you a splitting headache. It’s all about the people. I have never enjoyed acting as much as I did with my Greek colleagues although the director entirely disagreed with me.

As soon as the weekend approached all the Greek actors and actresses hopped on a plane to Athens and when they returned on Monday they were all still exhausted from the TV shows they participated in over the weekend. Nice boys and girls, I had no problems with them whatsoever because I could sympathize with them. They just did not feel like rehearsing. During the time I spent with them I came to appreciate what fine people they are. Children of the sun, who couldn't care less, but above all fierce patriots. Keep your hands off their country. After the Germans were driven away from Crete in 1944 a battle of resistance started between communists and non-communists which lasted until 1976."

## **Vendetta**

Above all, Greek superstition has stuck in Jack's mind. "When you say Crete, you say vendetta. It's as if time has stood still for a thousand years up in the mountains. So it's understandable that the locals are troubled when someone tries to film them. One day we made a shoot of a small hut just to see how it came up on film, not knowing that someone actually lived in it. When we finished filming the door flew open and a Greek woman stormed out crossing herself, afraid that she would be harmed in some way. A day earlier we were in a village where a father killed his daughter because he had caught her sitting bare legged on the front doorstep. These kind of things happen in Crete.

Jack Hedley made his entrance into the world in 1930 as Jack Hawkins and went by that name until 1956 when he became a film star. He then changed his name because there was another, already well known, actor with the same name. During those 26 years his mother, Jack never knew his father, had built up a flourishing printing works with the intention that Jack should eventually take over the business. However, after a military career, which lasted eight years and ended because he was severely injured in Malaysia, Jack had a preference for film and television. He went to drama school in London and of the 119 students who reached their finals only he and Glenda Jackson became famous.

**Translated from Dutch to English by Anna Pereboom  
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