

"WHO PAYS THE FERRYMAN BOOSTS GREEK TOURISM"

"No, I'm not going back. I don't like going on holidays. Why travel a few thousand kilometres just to do what one would normally do at home? It's just a lot of nonsense. I don't understand all this mass tourism. I'm pleased that my work allows for a lot of travel. That makes it meaningful. Next week I may be in Budapest or Rome. Who knows."

Jack Hedley is the leading actor in the new BBC series "Who Pays the Ferryman". A British actor who some may remember from "Colditz". A typical Londoner, distinguished, stolid and inscrutable.

He speaks quite casually about his part in "Ferryman" although the filming in Greece made a deep impression on him.

"It's a fascinating country, particularly in combination with the mythology on which the title of the series is based. In Greek mythology Charon was the ferryman who conveyed the spirits of the dead to the underworld in return for a coin. In ancient times a coin was often placed in the dead persons mouth to pay for conveyance. The title of this series is more or less symbolic. I portray one Alan Haldane who returns to Crete after fighting against the Germans during the war. He tries to locate his former sweetheart Melina from whom he has heard nothing for a very long time. Haldane digs in the past which is better left alone especially in Greece. You could hit upon some very frightening things.

As for himself, Jack Hedley found peace and a sense of timelessness which the actor experienced as extremely beneficial. "This theme gives the series a certain atmosphere, the same atmosphere that draws millions of people to Greece, not only for the sun but also for the mystique. In my opinion, by making Ferryman we've also made an eight hourly advertising campaign for Greek tourism. It's evident that since the series was broadcast in England tourism in the Greek island has increased immensely, particularly in Crete where the series was filmed. For that reason alone I wouldn't want to go back, much too crowded.

Hedley lives somewhere in London with his wife and two children. Quietly and calmly as befitting a man of almost fifty. "Actors are generally not very exciting people", he says. "All they are interested in is the stage and television. I don't know why I'm expected to give all these interviews, I really don't understand it. I read books, is that so very interesting?"

We assure him that it is, but Hedley can scarcely believe that. "It would be different if I wrote something myself. Every now and then I do try my hand at it, but I never get any further than the fourth page. Then it bores me to tears and I quit.

So we start discussing the Arabs who have recently started invading London. Jack Hedley lashes out at them in no uncertain terms. "They've had to make a new set of rules for the hospitals here", he says. "Some of these Arabs undergo first rate treatment but take along their whole family who all have to be fed. It's now been decided that food only goes to the patient. The down payment for a

house or a flat has been increased tenfold for Arabs, then they simply burn the whole place down . It's horrifying. They're even sitting on the floor in Harrods. Often these Arabs live in expensive hotels and rent houses to accommodate all their wives and every now and then, when it so pleases them, they send for one of them. It's unreal.

Apparently it's one of the few things Hedley can get himself worked up about. As for the rest, it's all the same to him.

"In the past I had the fighting spirit, I was a soldier, I had a political program but I gave it all up. War is madness and politics a pack of lies. At a certain moment I realized that my questions were being answered with a lot of bla-bla-bla but I never got a real answer so I stopped asking. Sadly I have to admit that I'm indifferent to the state of the world, how can it be otherwise?

Take China for instance. They had an earthquake there that hit an area the size of France. We hardly even heard about it. Who knows what happens over there? An estimated ten million are held prisoner for airing their political views. Mao Tse Tung solved the country's drug problems within two years. You know how he did that? He just had all addicts shot. That's one way of doing it. That's just one example, there's so many others. At one point it stops and you give up on it. The only answer to all those problems is indifference. I'm sorry to have to admit it, but it's true. "Tolerance is fantastic when you're young. The older you get the sooner it becomes indifference. Slaughter in Cambodia, famine in India, how can you absorb all that, for Gods sake? Anyway, this is turning into a very serious conversation. For eight hours this same Jack Hedley will be your guest on television. A friendly Brit, slightly world weary, but with a vital family. A bookworm who has lost his fighting spirit.

"Sometimes I like to watch them, the real numbskulls, people, who go to the pub, drink beer and throw darts. That's their main concern: will the dart hit the bullseye. Sometimes I envy them, that's how I'd like to live."

Hedley becomes more and more thoughtful. It's almost as though the questions he is being asked only confirm his own position in life. "I've come to the conclusion that you should only worry about matters concerning yourself. If you start worrying about anything other than paying off the mortgage, the daily chores, and the upbringing of your kids you'll go mad, at least I will.

**Translated from Dutch to English by Anna Pereboom
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