

JUBILEE by The Good Companions with Pam Schweitzer

End of war celebrations

Cast enter to peal of bells sharing joy with the audience that the war is over

*'Happy Days Are Here Again
And the skies above are clear again
Let us sing a song of cheer again
Happy days are here again'*

Hilda: All the Mums were out in the streets, doing Knees up Mother Brown

*'Knees Up Mother Brown
Knees Up Mother Brown
Knees up knees up
Don't get the breeze up
Knees Up Mother Brown'*

Forming a queue as rationing continues

Eileen: The war's over but we're still queuing

Hilda: I've just queued for an hour and then found it was for horse meat. What a waste of time!

Lil: Here, let her go to the front. She's expecting. (Kit gets pushed to the front of the queue as she's pregnant.)

Hilda: It's probably a Yank's baby. You can tell.

Kitty: My baby's due next week. I hope I get some sugar. I'm craving for sugar.

Joan: Look I've got this ration book and I don't really know what I'm doing. I was only married last week. My mum did it all before cos I was working till then.

Ralph sells black market coupons to Kathy and others disapprove.

Lil: I was shocked when the put bread on ration. It's worse than during the war.

Hyacinth: I'm in the Caribbean on the island of Antigua queuing for sugar, which is odd as that's where all the sugar comes from.

Dorothy: I'm in Guyana and even here we're queuing. They've rationed flour and corn meal. So many shortages even so far away.

Kathy: I've queued for ages to get a piece of chocolate and one banana on my baby's green ration book.

Margaret: And we won the war!

All sing "Yes, we have no bananas, we have no bananas today".

Men come home

*Song: Coming home my darling
Coming home to you
I can see your bright eyes shining
Every cloud has a silver lining
We'll be smiling through*

Eileen: It's 1945 and Bill's come out of the army. They've given him a lovely brown suit with a chalk stripe and a trilby hat. He looks very good in it. It's wonderful to have him back. We've found 3 rooms to rent in a big old house round the corner from my mum. "3 rooms!" Mum says. "What do you want with 3 rooms? There's only the two of you." Well we were just lucky, don't you think?

Emigration and Immigration stories here

Hilda: Well, I wasn't so lucky I can tell you. Stuck in one room with a baby. One bed, a table and the baby's cot. My husband was fed up, so he sent of for forms to get what they called an assisted passage to Australia. Lots of people were going. The Australians called them £10 Poms because you could get a one way ticket for £10. We spent two whole nights filling in these forms, pages long they were. Then he said, No, I don't want to leave my mum." I was furious and had a big row... well, after filling in all those forms!

Margaret: My husband was offered his old job back after the war at £30 a week. Well that's what he was on before the war. He felt very let down by that, so he wanted to go to Australia. But then we got a letter from a friend of ours who'd gone out there. She said it was horrible. She was living in a tin Nissan hut full of insects and the heat was unbearable. Her little girl had developed a skin condition and they couldn't get proper treatment. They just wanted to come home. Well, we didn't fancy it after that.

Hyacinth: I was on the island of Antigua and all the young men that had been in the forces during the war were so proud of themselves. They were walking around in their uniforms to show they'd been fighting for king and country. Of course they'd seen a lot more of the world and a lot of them wanted to leave the Caribbean and settle in England or America.

Dorothy: I was living with my family in Guyana at the end of the war. We felt the upheaval of the war years and the rationing and shortages after it ended. My father felt there weren't many opportunities for him at home and he decided to emigrate to the mother country to see if he could make a better life for us all over here. It wasn't long before we followed him, first my mother and then me

*Through the years of sadness
We'll be smiling through
Waiting for the day when I'll be
Coming home to you.*

New conflicts abroad

Ralph: It's 1950 and I'm a corporal in the Royal Army Ordinance Corps. I've been posted to Berlin in the British army of occupation in Germany. I've travelled through devastated cities with names familiar to me from radio broadcasts in the war years. All bombed to bits. Now I'm standing all alone in the Berlin Olympic stadium. It's huge, it held 100,000 people in 1936 and now it's empty and silent. I'm standing at the podium where Hitler addressed the crowds and thinking this is where the whole terrible business started.

Oops I've got to go and man the phones at army command. They've said it will be all quiet, a piece of cake, boring really and I should take a book.
(Ralph goes into office to hear phones ringing. He picks up phone and writes message after message.)

Ralph: Yes message received. Inform all unit commanders Soviet trop movements increasing. Yes, all leave cancelled. Yes, demobilisation postponed. Situation status red. Yes, war broken out in Korea. (Picks up phone himself) Sgt Major. Corporal Gooding here sir. Serious situation. Can you come over. So much for boredom!

Joan: (reading letter from Ron) 1950 Malaysia. (regiment. National service.....)
Hiya honey. Hope you're well. Missing you. Only another 2 months to go. We've been having intensive jungle manoeuvres and things are really hotting up. Double guard duty and live ammo. All leave cancelled. I think it's the trouble in Korea that's affecting us here. Got a bit tipsy the other night with the lads. Now don't tell me off but I had a tattoo done all up my arm. It says JOAN in a circle of flowers. You'll have to stay with me now! I don't even remember having it done. Please keep writing. Longing for the time when we will be together. All love, Ron. P.S. Just received devastating news. Our time out here has been extended by another 6 months. Will write when I know more.

Kitty: (reading letter from Bill) 1951 My darling Kitty. Sorry I haven't written for a few weeks. I was bitten by a scorpion and I wasn't allowed to move. I'm all right now and I didn't want to worry you by telling you. We're all feeling a bit fed up. We've heard that National Service is being extended to 2 years because of Korea. Longing to get back home and start life again with you. All my love, Bill.

*Through the years of sadness
We'll be smiling through
Waiting for the day when I'll be
Coming home to you.*

Baby bulge Mothers with babies in prams
Songs to babies one at a time in prams, then altogether:

Joan: *Bye baby bunting Daddy's gone a hunting*

Margaret: *How much is that doggy in the window?*

Eileen: *Mares eat oats and does eat oats and little lambs eat ivy*

Kitty: *Go to sleep my baby, close your pretty eyes, etc*

All: *Twenty tiny fingers, twenty tiny toes
Two angel faces each with a turned up nose
One looks like Mommy with a cute little curl on top
And the other one's got a big bald spot
Exactly like his Pop
Pop, pop, pop dop, pop
Ralph is the Pop who takes photos of all his babies.*

Early 50s images:

Margaret: I'm bouncing the pram down 4 flights of stairs from our one bed-roomed flat in an old Victorian house in Holloway. My daughter Pat (she's 4 now) is "helping". Hold on to the banisters love, that's right. First we've got to cross the big main road, you take your life in your hands and there's no crossings. Hold on to me Pat. We're going to walk all the way up the hill with the pram to Waterlow Park. That's the nearest park and it's miles away. There you are Pat, see the ducks. There's a bit of bread for them No sorry love we can't afford spare bread at the moment. On the way back I call in at the shops for 3 slices bacon for her, a bit of cheese, margarine

and a loaf. I give my Co-op number And I get a co-op tin check which I'll save towards something from the Co-op for Pat for Christmas.. Then it's bump bump bump up the stairs again with the pram. Shush, Daddy's on night work. Don't wake him up.

Hilda: I've been pushing the pram round all day without speaking to a soul. We're living on one of these new council estates out at Harold Hill. It's miles from anywhere. When they offered it to us we had to look on the map to find it. Course we had to take it cos we were living in one room back in Stratford. Oh it's lovely inside. Full of things we've never had before and new furniture. Great. But I'm so lonely. There's no shops. I don't know anyone and I miss my mum and all the family. My husband used to come home for his dinner, cos he only worked in Bow, but now he's not back till 7 o'clock. And I'm crying to him "I don't like it here. I don't want to live here." "Don't talk so daft" he says to me. "You don't want to go back there. We've only just come. You'll just have to get used to it."

Eileen: (pushing the pram) Bill's been home for his dinner and told me he's going to be late home again. He's working late a lot at the moment and doing lots of overtime. I'm taking Kevin round the park a bit. (To admiring neighbour) Yes he is lovely isn't. Yes, he was 10 pounds born! Oh thank you. Well I'm taking him round to see my mum.

Lil: (as Mum) Hello Eileen, I've just put the kettle on. Fancy a cuppa.

Eileen: Oh yes Mum. I'm really fed up. Bill's going to be late again tonight. By the time he's back I've put the kids to bed and the evening's gone.

Lil: Well at least you know where he is! I don't know what you're complaining about.

Eileen: Well, it turned out he was saving to take us off for two weeks holiday to a holiday camp on the Isle of Wight.

Lil: There you are love. You've got a good man there. I told you.

Joan: There we are, your satin cover from Nana. And the lovely cream pram all bouncy.. Silver Cross. We're off to the shops. Just to think, a year ago I was dancing every night. I had a job with my own money. No responsibility. It's a different life now. (She goes to the shops. Puts the pram brake on and leaves the baby outside.) Won't be a minute. (She goes into the shop.) "Now let's see. Sardines on toast Monday, beans on toast Tuesday, egg on toast Wednesday. Now it's Thursday, so it must be One tin of pilchards please. Thank you. (She collects the pilchards and goes to the bus stop and chats in queue.) Is there a 53 due? I'm sure I've forgotten something. Got my shopping, my pilchards. Oh my God. I've forgotten my baby. (She pushes past the people in the queue and tears back and finds him.) Thank God he's still here. And still asleep. Sorry baby!

Hyacinth: In the Caribbean, only the rich folk had prams. We didn't. You carried your baby on your hip. That's why I still walk with a list. Actually this is not my baby. It's my little sister. I'm looking after her for my mum while she's working in the fields. You see, I'm younger than these ladies and I was still at school in Barbuda in 1951. I'm so pleased when my mum comes back and I can go and play with my friends. (Hyacinth recites Caribbean clapping rhyme)

(cast rearrange chairs in 2 little groups as they sing:)

Oh island in the sun

Willed to me by my fathers hand

*All my days I will sing in praise
Of your forests, waters, your shining sand.*

Olive: There's plenty of sand where I am. It's 1951 and I'm a long way away from London. I'm in the Bahrein in the Persian Gulf. My husband Tom works for a big American oil company and we're living out here now. It's Thursday night and that's the beginning of the weekend out here. I always come up to the club for a meal and drinks with friends. All the wives sit out on the terrace looking out over the desert and that's where you hear all the latest gossip and scandal. Let's see what this lot are on about. (Silent dramatic gossip and shock from group I) Ooh I daren't tell you what they're saying.

Kit: Hey Olive, where's Mary Fisher tonight.

Olive: Haven't you heard? (Lots of interest here from group II) well they've sent her home. (More interest) She was at a party in the old buildings and you know they've got those big stone fireplaces and mantelpieces. Well, she'd had a bit too much and she was standing naked posing on the mantelpiece for the fellas when someone from came in and caught her.

Hilda: It's always the women who get sent back isn't it. The fellas never get into trouble do they.

Olive: She's going to find it a bit of a come-down in a couple of rooms in Surbiton.

Lil and Kathy: Ooh look, shooting stars.

Hyacinth: Let's makes a wish.

Eileen: It's like a firework display.

Margaret: Look there's a train of camels on the horizon.

Olive: As a matter of fact, a lot of those families who lived the ex-pat life never settled back in England, and they spent the rest of their lives travelling. I had a good time out there, but I was glad to come home. We'd saved enough out there in Bahrein for the deposit on a nice house of our own in Sidcup.

*Ours is a nice house ours is
We've got no rats or mouses*

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Kathy and the pre-fab story

Kathy: In the early 1950s the Council gave us a prefab. I moved in there with my husband and my little boy. We were very pleased to get it as we'd been living in one room in my parents' house. Well the council woman said to us:

Eileen: These prefabs are coming down in 6 months. We'll be putting you in something new, so don't bother unpacking.

Kathy: Well months passed and nothing happened. No news from the council, but we kept most of our stuff packed up, ready to go when they told us. And I had my second son there a little while after wards. I went up the Housing Department for news and the woman said:

Eileen: Oh yes, the new place will be ready in a couple of months. Don't bother unpacking anything. It'll be any time now.

Kathy: Well, I knew where the new council flats were supposed to be being built, but there was no progress and I began to give up. When I had my third son and was wanting to get settled, I went back to see the housing lady.

Eileen: Yes, I'm afraid there has been a delay, but it'll be any time now. Don't bother unpacking.

Kathy: You won't believe me if I tell you it took eleven years for them to provide us with a new home. Well, by that time it was a bit late for us as a family. My husband

had been working as a chauffeur, driving a beautiful car with a smart uniform. He'd get calls all hours of the day or night. (Phone rings)

Margaret: Please can I speak to your husband.

Kathy: It's for you.

Ralph: Right, I'll be there. Sorry love. What can I do?

Kathy: And off he'd go, all booted and suited. I got a bit suspicious when this same woman kept phoning the house at night time saying she needed to be collected and driven somewhere. Then one day, I took the boys out shopping, and when I came back, he'd gone. I didn't hear anything from him for ages. I had to ask my mum and my sister to look after the boys while I got a job driving an electric van for Taylor Woodrows. After a couple of months, he phoned.

Ralph: Hello Kathy. Listen I've been having a talk with Daphne

Kathy: That was his new woman, the one who'd been phoning up. He was living with her now.

Ralph: Yes, she says she'll take the three boys and bring them up as her own.

Kathy: Well, you tell her to come here and just try and take them. Well, he didn't bother after that. He came back once when I was out and more or less cleared the house. He took all his tools and everything and the caravan we'd all gone on our holidays in. But he didn't take the most important thing, my three boys.

Kitty's story of how she got her flat.

Kitty: After years and years on the housing list, we were finally offered a house in Lee. I went to look at it by myself while Mum looked after the baby. The children were at school and Bill was at work. It had a front room and a dining room with French windows into an overgrown garden. And upstairs it had three bedrooms, so there was room for all five children. I was so thrilled and we moved in as soon as we could. Most of the neighbours were lovely, but one lady said having council tenants would lower the tone. "Sod you!", I said. I was so upset and we never spoke after that. Well I've been in that house ever since and I love it. It was worth waiting for.

Woman's place in home

House work sequence

Women's dreams and aspirations

All start from doing a household task, then switch to the fantasy, the dream self.
Song underlying the opening and closing of this sequence is "Dreaming"

Dreaming, just idly dreaming

Dreaming and scheming of what I might have been

Might have been a tailor

Tinker, soldier, sailor

Might have been a failure

Not worth a bean

(Olive continues to play under the following)

Hilda: In the early 50s, after I had my children, I put on a lot of weight. At that time, it started to be very fashionable to be thin, so I started taking these slimming pills. Well, I was doing everything at the double. I had the children all bathed in half an hour, I ran everywhere. I couldn't sleep at night. My friend was taking them too and she was up all night knitting in bed while her husband snored beside her. She took

sleeping pills, but then she needed these slimming pills to start her up in the morning again. She's never slept all right to this day. As for me, my husband said "You're getting on my nerves running around all the time." And he threw the pills in the bin.
(cast resume song and housework)

*And there's millions just the same
Who are dreaming of what they might have been*

Hilda: I dreamed of being very slim and very glamorous. I'd imagine looking at myself in the mirror, maybe getting ready to go out, singing 'lovely to look at, delightful to know, heaven to kiss'

Margaret: I'm imagining I'm a model in a shop window with a short skirt and incredibly long legs. People stop to admire me. Look! 'sheer silk stockings, fantastic, a joy to behold'

Lil: I'm dreaming of going on an exploration trip to Canada. I've got my camera and my guide book. (Reproducing sounds of birds.) Beautiful birds everywhere. Never seen that one before.

Kitty: I'm dreaming of being a star turn on the dance floor at the Hammersmith Palais. Look at my beautiful high heeled shoes. I'm wearing a very glamorous black dance dress, the new length, short, just beneath the knee, and everyone is watching me dance.

Joan: I'm the greatest diver. I'm wearing a beautiful red swim suit, everyone is looking at me, and then I dive, an elegant double flip, then enter the water without causing a ripple.

Kathy: I dream of being an airhostess with smart uniform and little pill box hat. I'm just going up the aisle saying: 'we are landing in twenty minutes, would you like some more champagne?'

Eileen: I'm on the back of a motorbike with a lovely silk scarf round my neck and my hair flying behind me. I'm wrapped round a hunk of a motor bike rider and we're off to the west country. We'll stop for a cream tea on the way to the seaside.

Hyacinth: I'm wearing a scarlet suit with matching bag and gloves and I'm just stepping off a plane from USA to Barbuda laden with presents. I say to all my family "I told you I'd come back, and come back rich"

*And there's millions just the same
Who are dreaming of what they might have been*

Ideal Home

Margaret's husband and the encyclopaedias.

Margaret: In the early 50s, there was lots of people coming round the doors trying to sell you things. Anything from a feather duster to encyclopaedias.

Eileen: That looks possible. Nicely kept home.

Lil: Yes, a kiddy's bike outside. Shall we try? (Knocks on door and Margaret opens)

Eileen: Can we interest you in this set of encyclopaedias. There's every possible subject and everything you'd ever need to know.

Lil: You've got children haven't you? And you want them to do well.

Eileen: It's a special offer. Half a crown a week. And just for this week, there's no down payment. The offer runs out at the weekend.

Margaret: My husband has to decide about these things. He's not here till tonight. I'm afraid.

Lil: Well, we'll leave you a couple and we'll come back to see your husband later, so he can have had a good look. (to Eileen) Do you think that's a sale?

Eileen: You can never tell.

Ralph: No, you didn't fall for that did you?

Margaret: You just sit in your chair and have a browse. It's got ever so much in it. Good gardening tips I was looking at.

Ralph: We've only got a window box.

Margaret: (with her own volume) Look at that, "The sex life of the flea"

Ralph: (getting interested) Ooh it's good on astronomy. That's a long section. Pass me a bit of paper and a pencil. (he writes furiously)

Margaret: Do you mean we can have it then?

Ralph: No of course not. We can't afford it. I'm going to the Red Lion. You'll have to tell them.

Margaret: Typical! I had an awful job getting these salesmen out of the house. In the end I told them I was ill, I had a tummy ache, and they finally went. I had to tell lies to get rid of them.

Hilda's Hoover man.

Hyacinth: Good morning madam. I've something here you simply won't be able to resist. It does everything in the house for you. It's an Electrolux with separate small brushes to do the stairs.

Hilda: Oh, isn't that wonderful.

Hyacinth: Let me show you. See that bit of carpet? Well, watch this. (She hovers and empties out the dirt from the Hoover) Look at all that muck that came out..

Hilda: And I cleaned that this morning. I don't believe it.

Hyacinth: Yes and it's only £20. Are you having it?

Hilda: Well my husband decides these things.

Hyacinth: You tell him you want it. You're the one doing the housework. (she goes)

Ralph: Is my dinner ready?

Hilda: Yes, I'll get it out of the oven. This man came today selling vacuum cleaners. You should've seen all the stuff it does. And it's only £20.

Ralph: Only! We can't afford that sort of price. You're not having it and that's that.

Hilda: well then I'm not cleaning the flat. You can do it yourself in future. (She cries)

Ralph: Sorry love. Don't let's fight. Listen, I'll take you to the Ideal Home exhibition. Not buying though. Just looking. All right?

Hilda: Ooh yes. (to audience) Everyone went there to see the latest ideas.

Ralph: Wow, look at that Hoover. (Everyone crowds behind Ralph and Hilda for the demonstration.) Look, it cleans your curtains by spraying out cleaner from that nozzle and sucking up the dirt with that one. And it paints the house with that special spray thing. Still, I bet it'd get all gunged up. We're not having that.

Eileen: (with everyone peering over to watch demonstration) Ooh look at that. A bottle opener combined with a glass cutter. That's clever isn't it.?

Kitty: Ooh look, that machine peels all your potatoes and makes them come out crinkly. Wonderful. I'll have one of those.

Joan: Ooh a magic duster. It'll do the dusting for you and make everything sparkle. I'll have one of those.

Hilda: wipe clean formica furniture bright red. Lovely.

Dorothy: Isn't that clever. You take a radish and twizzle it in that and you've got a rose.

Kathy: I'll have one of those. Course, when you got them home you never used them. Couldn't get them to work!

Margaret: Ooh that'd be good for baked apples. A corer and then you put your currants inside. Lovely.

Kathy: Ooh you're making me hungry. Look, they're giving away free food over there. (Everyone converges on freebies takes bags and little hovis loaves)

Eileen: Look Bill (to Ralph) I've got this wonderful chair we can make. Only 10/-It's a kit and very easy to put together.

Ralph: Have you got all the screws and all the directions?

(They struggle connecting As and Bs, and Eileen is already planning for another one and a 3-piece suite, but when she sits in the chair, she falls out. They never use it and it ends up as firewood and a real waste of money)

Home work stories

Death of King George VI

Lil, Kitty, Dorothy and Kathy guard the King's coffin. They are positioned at the four corners of an imaginary rectangle with backs to one another and holding a sword each.

Hilda: (ironing turns on the radio and hears only. the Boom Boom noise that announces the death of the king.) Oh Gord. I think my wireless is bust. I can't get any music. (She is quite upset because she cannot listen to music.)

Ralph: This is London. It is with the greatest sorrow that we make the following announcement. It was announced from Sandringham at 10.45 today, February 6th 1952 that the King who retired to rest last night in his usual health passed peacefully away in his sleep earlier this morning. Of George VI it will be written, "This was a king his people loved". (The four ladies keep their position throughout the scene to fix the context around the king's death. Eileen and then Joan line up to go past the coffin, sadly, talking about the king one at a time to pay their respects)

Eileen: I felt I had to come. I feel so sad. I only live in London, but people have come from all over the country to pay their respects. God rest his soul.

Joan: He was a good man, especially when we had the bombing in the East End. He was one of us. We will miss him.

Margaret: My Ken brought three newspapers home tonight, with the sad news. Look this one's got a black border. It says, "The King is dead. Long live the Queen".

(All the last scenes are taking place on the right side of the grave.

On the left side there are Olive who at the time was in Bahrein and Hyacinth who was going to school in the Caribbean.)

Olive: I'm still out in Bahrein on the Persian Gulf. (She makes a phone call) Are you there Betty. Have you heard the news about the king? Sad isn't it? Ooh and the club's closed so we can't get a drink there tonight. But Tom's just had a case of beer delivered. We're the only ones with booze, so everyone's meeting up here. Better come over quickly or it will all be gone.

Hyacinth: I'm still in Barbuda in the Caribbean. I'm very sad about the king's death because he was my king too you know. But, there is going to be a bank holiday so I have a day off school. So I'm sad, but I'm happy too.

Coronation in 1953 and the arrival of TV

Coronation parade

Watching coronation on TV

Hilda's story and the pub scene

Children's party and ending.

All sing

Friends and Neighbours

When you've got friends and neighbours

All the world is a happier place

Friends and Neighbours

Put a smile on the gloomiest face

Just take your little troubles and share them

With the folks next door

Makes it twice as easy to bear them

That's what friends are for

Cos if you've friends and neighbours

That is something money won't buy

You can hold your head up high

Although you've not a penny

And your house may be tumbling down

With friends and neighbours

You're the richest man in town.