

Scanned and corrected by Dirk Gently- as usual. If you have some interesting books to be scanned (Finnish and Estonian preferred!), and they'd interest me as well, you can contact me. Don't forget the three letters: i-R-C! Sorry, no Email addy is possible. I had lots of probs scanning/editing this text, so it'd be great (if you are a DNA fan) if you sent me some greets in demoz/diskmags of yours, if you appreciate my effort to make this book available for you.

I recommend you keeping the file's Word format coz I've edited the text with Bold and Italic characters as well.

There were some TIFFs as well in the archive. COVER.TIF was the TrueColor TIFF of the cover. The other TIFFs were:

6.tif: the name (and the text) speaks for itself :) (600 dpi, BW 256, 20%)

APP1\_1... APP1\_4.tif: Appendix 1's 4 pages (900 dpi, BW 256, 20%)

Anyway, to make life easier, I've also typed in the contents of the mentioned TIFs so you won't need to get the TIFFs.

\*\*\*\*\*COVER\*\*\*\*\*

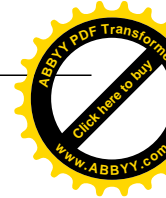
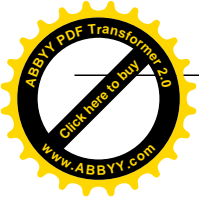
'IT'S ALL  
ABSOLUTELY  
DEVASTATINGLY  
TRUE -

EXCEPT THE BITS  
THAT ARE LIES'

This is the story of an ape-descended human called Douglas Adams who, in a field in Innsbruck, in 1971, had an idea.

It us also the story of a book called, at a very high level of improbability, The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy; of the radio series that started it all; the five book trilogy it comprises; and the computer game, towel and television series that it, in its turn, has spawned.

'DESERVES AS MUCH CULT  
SUCCESS AS THE HITCH HIKER'S  
BOOKS THEMSELVES'  
Time Out



## REVISED & UPDATED

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\*\*\*\*\*

`Hilarious fun... a source of much delightful trivia'  
- Publisbers Weekly

`Fanciful and irreverent... adds much extra information'  
- Forecast

`Droll and informative... indispensable'  
- American Library Association

`Indispensable... a treasure trove of quotes and anecdotes'  
- Locus

Full of fun... and much more information than most books  
of this type'  
- Science Fiction Chronicle

`An excellent insight into the creative process'  
- Vector

### BOOKS BY DOUGLAS ADAMS

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

The Restaurant at the End of the Universe

Life, the Universe, and Everything

So Long, and Thanks for All the Fish

Mostly Harmless

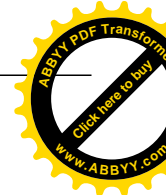
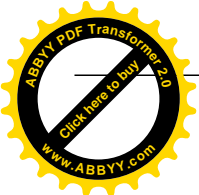
The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy: A Trilogy in Four Parts

The Utterly Utterly Merry Comic Relief

Christmas Book (Editor)

The Meaning of Liff (with John Lloyd)

The Deeper Meaning of Liff (with John Lloyd)



The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy: The Original Radio Scripts  
Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency  
The Long Dark Tea-Time of the Soul  
Last Chance to See (with Mark Carwardine)

**OTHER BOOKS BY NEIL GAIMAN**

Black Orchid  
The Books of Magic  
Ghastly Beyond Belief  
Sandman: The Doll's House  
Sandman: Dream Country  
Sandman: A Game of You  
Sandman: Preludes and Nocturnes  
Sandman: Season of Mists  
Violent Cases

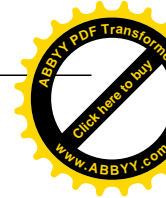
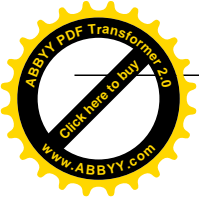
**DON'T PANIC - DOUGLAS ADAMS & THE  
HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY**  
ISBN 185286 411 7

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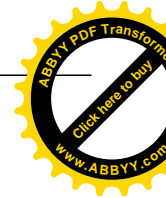
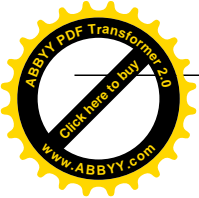
Because she's threatened me with consequences too dreadful to consider if I don't dedicate a book to her...

And because she's taken to starting every transatlantic conversation with "Have you dedicated a book to me yet?" ... I would like to dedicate this book to intelligent life forms everywhere.

And to my sister, Claire.

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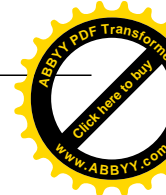
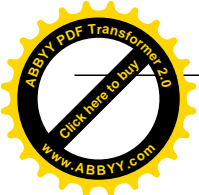
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## Foreword

THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY is the most remarkable, certainly the most successful book ever to come out of the great publishing companies of Ursa Minor. It is about the



size of a paperback book, but looks more like a large pocket calculator, having upon its face over a hundred flat press-buttons and a screen about four inches square, upon which any one of over six million pages can be summoned almost instantly. It comes in a durable plastic cover, upon which the words

DON'T PANIC!

are printed in large, friendly letters.

There are no known copies of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* on this planet at this time.

This is not its story.

It is, however, the story of a book also called, at a very high level of improbability, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*; of the radio series that started it all; the five-book trilogy it comprises; the computer game, towel, and television series that it, in its turn, has spawned.

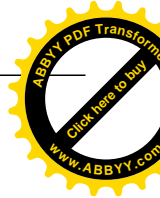
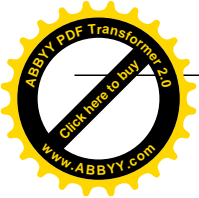
To tell the story of the book - and the radio series, and the towel - it is best to tell the story of some of the minds behind it. Foremost among these is an ape-descended human from the planet Earth, although at the time our story starts he no more knows his destiny (which will include international travel, computers, an almost infinite number of lunches, and becoming mindbogglingly rich) than an olive knows how to mix a Pan Galactic Gargle Blaster.

His name is Douglas Adams, he is six foot five inches tall, and he is about to have an idea.

0

The Hitchhiker's Guide to Europe

THE IDEA IN QUESTION bubbled into Douglas Adams's mind



quite spontaneously, in a field in Innsbruck. He no longer has any personal memory of it having happened. But it's the story he tells, and, if there can be such a thing, it's the beginning. If you have to take a flag reading THE STORY STARTS HERE and stick it into the story, then there is no other place to put it.

It was 1971, and the eighteen-year-old Douglas Adams was hitchhiking his way across Europe with a copy of The Hitchhiker's Guide to Europe that he had stolen (he hadn't bothered `borrowing' a copy of Europe on \$5 a Day; he didn't have that kind of money).

He was drunk. He was poverty-stricken. He was too poor to afford a room at a youth hostel (the entire story is told at length in his introduction to The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy: A Trilogy in Four Parts in England, and The Hitchhiker's Trilogy in the US) and he wound up, at the end of a harrowing day, flat on his back in a field in Innsbruck, staring up at the stars.

"Somebody," he thought, "somebody really ought to write a Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy."

He forgot about the idea shortly thereafter.

Five years later, while he was struggling to think of a legitimate reason for an alien to visit Earth, the phrase returned to him. The rest is history, and will be told in this book.

The field in Innsbruck has since been transformed into an unremarkable section of autobahn.

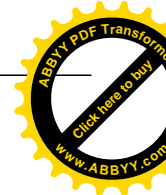
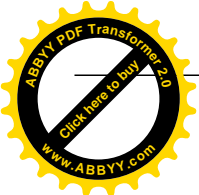
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"When you're a student or whatever, and you can't afford a car, or a plane fare, or even a train fare, all you can do is hope that someone will stop and pick you up.

"At the moment we can't afford to go to other planets. We don't have the ships to take us there. There may be other people out there (I don't have any opinions about Life Out There, I just don't know) but it's nice to think that one could, even here and now, be whisked away just by hitchhiking."

- Douglas Adams, 1984.

\*\*\*\*\*



DEOXYRIBONUCLEIC ACID, commonly known as DNA, is the fundamental genetic building block for all living creatures. The structure of DNA was discovered and unravelled, along with its significance, in Cambridge, England, in 1952, and announced to the world in March 1953.

This was not the first DNA to appear in Cambridge, however. A year earlier, on the 11 th March 1952, Douglas Noel Adams was born in a former Victorian workhouse in Cambridge. His mother was a nurse, his father a postgraduate theology student who was training for holy orders, but gave it up when his friends managed to persuade him it was a terrible idea.

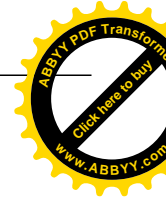
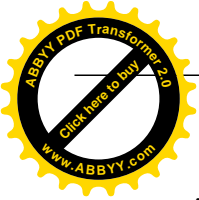
His parents moved from Cambridge when he was six months old, and divorced when he was five. At that time, Douglas was considered a little strange, possibly even retarded. He had only just learned to talk and, "I was the only kid who anybody I knew has ever seen actually walk into a lamppost with his eyes wide open. Everybody assumed that there must be something going on inside, because there sure as hell didn't seem to be anything going on on the outside!"

Douglas was a solitary child; he had few close friends, and one sister, Susan, three years younger than he was.

In September 1959 he started at Brentwood School in Essex, where he stayed until 1970. He says of the school, "We tended to produce a lot of media trendies. Me, Griff Rhys Jones, Noel Edmunds, Simon Bell (who wrote the novelisation for Griff and Mel Smith's famous non-award winning movie, Morons from Outer Space; he's not a megastar yet, but he gives great parties). A lot of the people who designed the Amstrad Computer were at Brentwood, as well. But we had a very major lack of archbishops, prime ministers and generals."

He was not particularly happy at school, most of his memories having to do with "basically trying to get off games". Although he was quite good at cricket and swimming he was terrible at football and "diabolically bad at rugby - the first time I ever played it, I broke my own nose on my knee. It's quite a trick, especially standing up.





"They could never work out at school whether I was terribly clever or terribly stupid. I always had to understand everything fully before I was prepared to say anything."

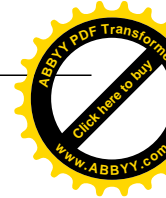
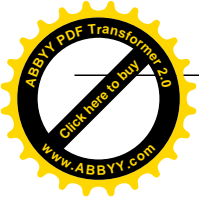
He was a tall and gawky child, self-conscious of his height: "My last year at prep school we had to wear short trousers, and I was so absurdly lanky, and looked so ridiculous, that my mother applied for special permission for me to wear long trousers. And they said no, pointing out I was just about to go into the main school. I went to the main school and was allowed to wear long trousers, at which point we discovered they didn't have any long enough for me. So for the first term I still had to go to school in short trousers."

His ambitions at that time had more to do with the sciences than the arts: "At the age when most kids wanted to be firemen, I wanted to be a nuclear physicist. I never made it because my arithmetic was too bad - I was good at maths conceptually, but lousy at arithmetic, so I didn't specialise in the sciences. If I had known what they were, I would have liked to be a software engineer... but they didn't have them then."

His hobbies revolved around making model aeroplanes ("I had a big display on top of a chest of drawers at home. There was a large old mirror that stood behind them, and one day the mirror fell forward and crushed the lot of them. I never made a model plane after that, I was upset, distraught for days. It was this mindless blow that fate had dealt me..."), playing the guitar, and reading.

"I didn't read as much as, looking back, I wish I had done. And not the right things, either. (When I have children I'll do as much to encourage them to read as possible. You know, like hit them if they don't.) I read Biggles, and Captain W. E. Johns's famous science fiction series - I particularly remember a book called Quest for the Perfect Planet, a major influence, that was. There was an author called Eric Leyland, who nobody else ever seems to have heard of: he had a hero called David Flame, who was the James Bond of the ten-year-olds. But when I should have been packing in the old Dickens, I was reading Eric Leyland instead. But there you go - you can't tell kids, can you?"

Douglas was also an avid reader of Eagle, at that time Britain's top children's comic, and home of Dan Dare. `Dan Dare', drawn by artist Frank Hampson, was a science fiction strip detailing the banle between jut-jawed space pilot Dare, his comic



sidekick Digby, and the evil green Mekon. It was in Eagle that Douglas first saw print. He had two letters published there at the age of eleven, and was paid the (then) enormous sum of ten shillings each for them. The short story shows a certain precocious talent (see page 6).

Of Alice in Wonderland, often cited as an influence, he says I read - or rather, had read to me - Alice in Wonderland as a child and I hated it. It really frightened me. Some months ago, I tried to go back to it and read a few pages, and I thought, 'This is jolly good stuff, but still...' If it wasn't for that slightly nightmarish quality that I remember as a kid I'd've enjoyed it, but I couldn't shake that feeling. So although people like to suggest that Carroll was a big influence - using the number 42 and all that - he really was not. "

The first time that Douglas ever thought seriously about writing was at the age of ten: "There was a master at school called Halford. Every Thursday after break we had an hour's class called composition. We had to write a story. And I was the only person

\*\*\*\*\* Dirk: look at 6.tif! \*\*\*\*\*

EAGLE merry-go-round

EAGLE AND BOYS' WORLD 27 FEBRUARY 1965

### SHORT STORY

"' London Transport Lost Property Office'- this is it," said Mr. Smith, looking in at the window. As he went in, he tripped over the little step and almost crashed through the glass door.

"That could be dangerous - I must remember it when I go out," he muttered.

"Can I help you?" asked the lost-property officer.

"Yes, I lost something on the 86 bus yesterday."

"Well, what was it you lost?" asked the officer.

"I'm afraid I can't remember," said Mr. Smith.

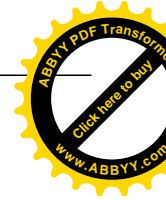
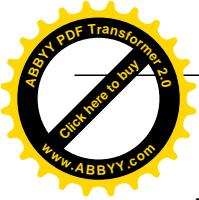
"Well, I can't help you, then," said the exasperated officer.

"Was anything found on the bus?" asked Mr Smith.

"I'm afraid not, but can you remember anything about this thing?" said the officer, desperately trying to be helpful.

"Yes, I can remember that it was a very bad - whatever-it-was."

"Anything else?"



"Ah, yes, now I come to think of it, it was something like a sieve," said Mr. Smith, and he put his elbow on the highly polished counter and rested his chin on his hands. Suddenly, his chin met the counter with a resounding crack. But before the officer could assist him up, Mr Smith jumped triumphantly into the air.

"Thank you very much," he said.

"What for?" said the officer.

"I've found it," said Mr. Smith

"Found what?"

"My memory!" said Mr Smith, and he turned round, tripped over the step and smashed through the glass door!

D.N.Adams (12), Brentwood, Essex.

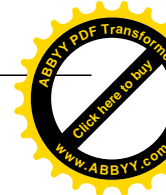
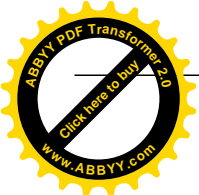
who ever got ten out of ten for a story. I've never forgotten that. And the odd thing is, I was talking to someone who has a kid in the same class, and apparently they were all grumbling about how Mr Halford never gave out decent marks for stories. And he told them, 'I did once. The only person I ever gave ten out of ten to was Douglas Adams.' He remembers as well.

"I was pleased by that. Whenever I'm stuck on a writer's block (which is most of the time) and I just sit there, and I can't think of anything, I think, 'Ah! But I once did get ten out of ten!' In a way it gives me more of a boost than having sold a million copies of this or a million of that. I think, 'I got ten out of ten once. . .'"

His writing career was not always that successful.

"I don't know when the first thoughts of writing came, but it was actually quite early on. Rather silly thoughts, really, as there was nothing to suggest that I could actually do it. All of my life I've been attracted by the idea of being a writer, but like all writers I don't so much like writing as having written. I came across some old school literary magazines a couple of years ago, and I went through them to go back and find the stuff I was writing then. But I couldn't find anything I'd written, which puzzled me until I remembered that each time I meant to try to write something, I'd miss the deadline by two weeks."

He appeared in school plays, and discovered a love of performing ("I was a slightly strange actor. There tended to be things I could do well and other things I couldn't begin to do. . . I couldn't do dwarves for example; I had a lot of trouble with dwarf parts."). Then, while watching *The Frost Report* one evening, his



ambitions of a life well-spent as a nuclear physicist, eminent surgeon, or professor of English began to evaporate. Douglas's attention was caught by six-foot five-inch future Python John Cleese, performing in sketches that were mostly self-written. "I can do that!" thought Douglas, "I'm as tall as he is!" [Although at first glance this theory may seem flippant, a brief examination shows that the field of British comedy is littered with incredibly tall people. John Cleese, Peter Cook, Ray Galton and Alan Simpson and Adams himself are all 6'5", Frank Muir is 6'6", as is Dennis Norden.. Douglas has often mentioned that the late Graham Chapman, at only 6'3", was thus four per cent less funny than the rest. .]

In order to become a writer-performer, he had to write. This caused problems: "I used to spend a lot of time in front of a typewriter wondering what to write, tearing up pieces of paper and never actually writing anything." This not-writing quality was to become a hallmark of Douglas's later work.

But the die had been cast. Adams abandoned all his daydreams, even those of being a rock star (he was, and indeed is; a creditable guitarist), and set out to be a writer-performer.

He left school in December 1970, and, on the strength of an essay on the revival of religious poetry (which brought together on one sheet of foolscap Christopher Smart, Gerard Manley Hopkins and John Lennon), he won an exhibition to study English at Cambridge.

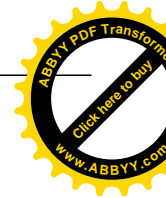
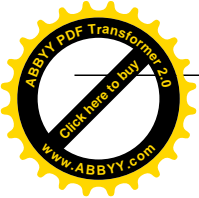
And it was important to Douglas that it was Cambridge.

Not just because his father had been to Cambridge, or simply because he had been born there. He wanted to go to Cambridge because it was from a Cambridge University society that the writers and performers of such shows as *Beyond the Fringe*, *That Was The Week That Was*, *I'm Sorry I'll Read That Again*, and, of course, many of the Monty Python's Flying Circus team had come.

Douglas Adams wanted to join Footlights.

2

Cambridge and Other  
Recurrent Phenomena



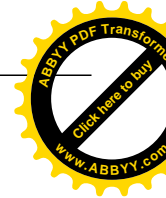
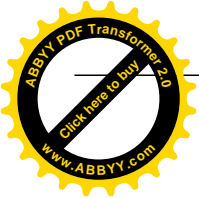
BEFORE GOING UP TO CAMBRIDGE, Douglas Adams had begun the series of jobs that would serve him on book jackets ever after. He had decided to hitchhike to Istanbul, and in order to make the money to travel he worked first as a chicken-shed cleaner, then as a porter in the X-ray department of Yeovil General Hospital (while at school he had worked as a porter in a mental hospital).

The hitchhike itself was not spectacularly successful: although he reached Istanbul, he contracted food poisoning there, and was forced to return to England by train. He slept in the corridors, felt extremely sorry for himself, and was hospitalised on his return to England. Perhaps it was a combination of his illness with the hospital work he had been doing, but on his arrival home he began to feel guilty for not going on to study medicine.

"I come from a somewhat medical family. My mother was a nurse, my stepfather was a vet, and my father's father (whom I never actually met) was a very eminent ear nose and throat specialist in Glasgow. I kept working in hospitals as well. And I had the feeling that, if there is Anyone Up There, He kept tapping me on the shoulder and saying, 'Oy! Oy! Get your stethoscope out! This is what you should be doing!' But I never did."

Douglas rejected medicine, in part because he wanted to be a writer-performer (although at least four top British writer-performers have been doctors - Jonathan Miller, Graham Chapman, Graeme Garden and Rob Buckman) and in part because it would have meant going off for another two years to get a new set of A-levels. Douglas went on to study English literature at St John's College, Cambridge.

Academically, Douglas's career was covered in less than glory, although he is still proud of the work he did on



Christopher Smart, the eighteenth-century poet.

"For years Smart stayed at Cambridge as the most drunken and lecherous student they'd ever had. He used to do drag revues drank in the same pub that I did. He went from Cambridge to Grub Street, where he was the most debauched journalist they had ever had, when suddenly he underwent an extreme religious conversion and did things like falling on his knees in the middle of the street and praying to God aloud. It was for that that he was thrust into a loony bin, in which he wrote his only work, the Jubilate Agno, which was as long as Paradise Lost, and was an attempt to write the first Hebraic verse in English."

Even as an undergraduate, Douglas was perpetually missing deadlines: in three years he only managed to complete three essays. This however may have had less to do with his fabled lateness than with the fact that his studies came in a poor third to his other interests - performing and pubs.

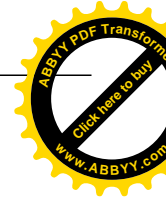
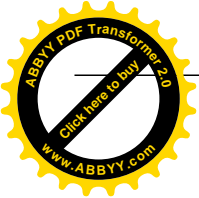
Although Douglas had gone to Cambridge with the intention of joining Footlights, he was never happy with them, nor they with him. His first term attempt to join Footlights was a failure - he found them "aloof and rather pleased with themselves" and, being made to feel rather a 'new boy', he wound up joining CULES (Cambridge University Light Entertainment Society) and doing jolly little shows in hospitals, prisons, and the like. These shows were not particularly popular (especially not in the prisons), and Douglas now regards the whole thing with no little embarrassment.

In his second term, feeling slightly more confident, he auditioned with a friend called Keith Jeffrey at one of the Footlights 'smokers' - informal evenings at which anybody could get up and perform. "It was there that I discovered that there was one guy, totally unlike the rest of the Footlights Committee, who was actually friendly and helpful, all the things the others weren't, a completely nice guy named Simon Jones. He encouraged me, and from then on I got on increasingly well in Footlights.

"But Footlights had a very traditional role to fulfil: it had to produce a pantomime at Christmas, a late-night revue in the middle term, and a spectacular commercial show at the end of every year, as a result of which it couldn't afford to take any risks.

"I think it was Henry Porter, a history don who was treasurer of Footlights, who said that the shows that had gone on





to become famous were not the Cambridge shows but subsequent reworkings. Beyond the Fringe wasn't a Footlights show, neither was Cambridge Circus (the show that launched John Cleese et al), it wasn't the Cambridge show but a reworking done after they'd all left Cambridge. Footlights shows themselves had to fight against the constraints of what Footlights had to produce every year. "

Douglas rapidly earned a reputation for suggesting ideas that struck everyone else as hopelessly implausible. He felt strait-jacketed by Footlights (and by the fact that nobody in Footlights seemed to feel his ideas were particularly funny) and, with two friends, he formed a `guerilla' revue group called Adams-Smith-Adams (because two members of the group were called Adams, and the third, as you might already have guessed, was called Smith)". (Will Adams joined a knitwear company upon leaving university; Martin Smith

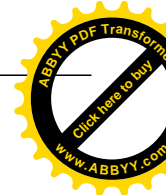
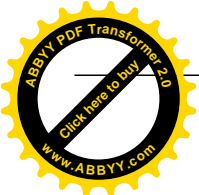
went into advertising, and was later immortalised as `bloody Martin Smith of Croydon' in a book written by Douglas.)

As Douglas explained, "We invested all our money - \$40, or whatever it was - in hiring a theatre for a week, and then we knew we had to do it. So we wrote it, performed it, and had a considerable hit with it. It was a great moment. I really loved that."

It was then that Douglas made an irrevocable decision to become a writer. This was to cause him no little anguish and aggravation in the years to come.

The show was called Several Poor Players Strutting and Fretting, and this extract from the programme notes has the flavour of early Douglas Adams:

By the time you've read the opposite page (cast and credits) you'll probably be feeling restive and wondering when the show will start. Well, it should start at the exact moment that you read the first word of the next sentence. If it hasn't started yet, you're reading too fast. If it still hasn't started, you're reading much too fast, and we can recommend our own book `How To Impair Your Reading Ability', written and published by Adams-Smith-Adams. With the aid of this slim volume, you will find that your reading powers shrink to practically nothing within a very short space of time. The more you read, the



slower you get. Theoretically, you will never get to the end, which makes it the best value book you will ever have bought!

The following year Adams-Smith-Adams (aided in performance by the female presence of Margaret Thomas, who, the programme booklet declared, was 'getting quite fed up with the improper advances that are continually being made to her by the other three, all of whom are deeply and tragically in love with her') took to the stage again in their second revue, *The Patter of Tiny Minds*. These shows were popular, packed out, and generally considered to be somewhat better than the orthodox *Footlights*' offerings.

Douglas considers his favourite sketches of this period to be one about a railway signalman who caused havoc over the entire Southern Region by attempting to demonstrate the principles of existentialism using the points system, and another of which he says, "It's hard to describe what it was about - there was a lot of stuff about cat-shaving, which was very bizarre but seemed quite funny at the time."

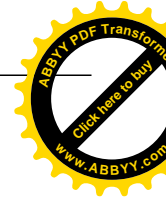
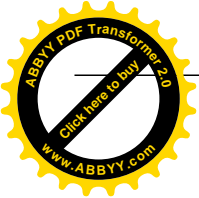
It was shortly after this that Douglas Adams gave up performing permanently to concentrate on writing; this was due to his continuing upset with *Footlights*, and specifically with the 1974 *Footlights Show*. As he explains, "It is something that happened with *Footlights* that I still get upset about, because I think that *Footlights* should be a writer-performer show. But, in my day, *Footlights* became a producer's show. The producer says who's going to be in it, and who he wants to write it, they are appointed and the producer calls the tune. I think that's wrong, that it's too artificial. My year in *Footlights* was full of immensely talented people who never actually got the chance to work together properly.

"In my case, *Footlights* came to us - Adams-Smith-Adams - and said, 'Can we use all this material that the three of you have written?' and we said, 'Fine, okay', whereupon they said, 'But we don't want you to be in it!'"

As things turned out, Martin Smith did appear in the show, (alongside Griff Rhys Jones and future *Ford Prefect*, Geoffrey McGivern) but neither of the Adamses appeared, something that Douglas Adams is still slightly bitter about.

Douglas was still hitchhiking over Europe, and taking





strange jobs to pay for incidentals. In another bid to get to Istanbul, he took a job building barns, during the course of which he crashed a tractor, which broke his pelvis, ripped up his arm, and damaged the road so badly it needed to be repaired. He wound up in hospital once more, but knew that it was far too late for him to become a doctor.

In Summer 1974, Douglas Adams left Cambridge: young, confident, and certain that the world would beat a path to his door, that he was destined to change the face of comedy across the globe.

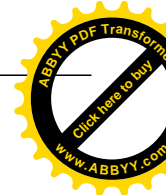
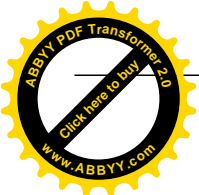
Of course it would, and he did. But it did not seem that way at the time.

3

## The Wilderness Years

FOLLOWING HIS GRADUATION from Cambridge, Douglas Adams began doing the occasional office job, working as a filing clerk while trying to work out what to do with the rest of his life. He wrote a number of sketches for Weekending - a radio show that satirises the events, chiefly political, of the past week. Due to his inability to write to order, and the fact that, although many of his sketches were funny, they were unlike anything ever broadcast on the show before, almost none of these sketches ever went out on the air.

The Footlights show of that year, Chox, not only got to the West End - the first Footlights show in a long time to do so - but it was also televised (Adams remembers fondly the enormous sum of \$100 he was paid for the television rights to his sketches).



The show was, in Adams's words, "a dreadful flop", but a number of former Footlights personnel came to see it.

Among them was Graham Chapman. Chapman was a six foot three inch-tall doctor who, instead of practising medicine, found himself part of the Monty Python team (he was Arthur in Monty Python and the Holy Grail, and Brian in Monty Python's Life of Brian). At that time the future of Monty Python was uncertain, and the members of the team were diversifying and experimenting with projects of their own. Chapman liked Adams's work, and invited him over for a drink. Douglas came for the drink, got chatting, and began a writing partnership that was to last for the next eighteen months. It looked like it was Adams's big break - at 22 he was working with one of the top people in British comedy.

Unfortunately, very few of the projects that Douglas and Graham worked on were to see the light of day.

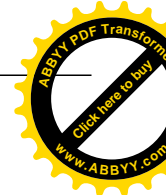
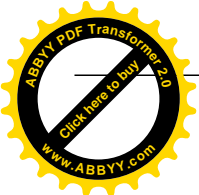
One that did - or nearly did - was Out of the Trees, a television sketch show that starred Chapman and Simon Jones. It was shown once, late at night on BBC 2, with no publicity, garnered no reviews, and went no further.

"My favourite bit from that show was a lovely sketch about Genghis Khan; who had become so powerful and important and successful as a conqueror he really didn't have any time for conquering anymore, because he was constantly off seeing his financial advisors and so on - it was partly a reflection of what one heard Graham muttering about the other members of Monty Python. I was very fond of that sketch. (This sketch, rewritten into a short story, incorporated into the Hitchhiker's

canon and illustrated by Michael Foreman, appeared in The Utterly Utterly Merry Comic Relief Christmas Book.)

"The second episode of Out of the Trees was never even made, although there was some nice stuff in it. My favourite sketch was called 'A Haddock at Eton', about a haddock given a place at Eton to show the place was becoming more egalitarian. It got terribly bullied. Only it gets a rich guardian anyway, so the whole exercise is rather futile."

While Out of the Trees was not exactly a success, The Ringo Starr Show was even less noteworthy. It didn't even get to the



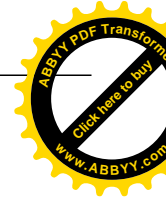
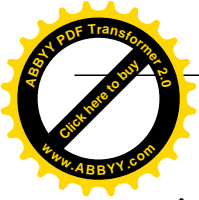
pilot stage. The show was to be an SF comedy, starring Ringo as a chauffeur who carried his boss around on his back, until one day a flying saucer landed and mistakenly gave Ringo the powers of his ancestral race - the power to travel through space, to do flower arranging, and to destroy the universe by waving his hand.

It would have been an hour-long American television special, but the project fell through. Douglas remembers the show with affection, and later salvaged one of his ideas from it in *Hitchhiker's*: this was the Golgafrincham B - Ark sequence. Other Chapman-connected projects of this time include some work on the Holy Grail record, for which a sketch of Douglas's was highly rewritten by various hands: in its original form it concerned the digging up of Marilyn Monroe's corpse to star in a movie...

Douglas also helped write ("nearly came to blows over") parts of Chapman's autobiography, *A Liar's Autobiography*. He co-wrote an episode of *Doctor on the Go*. It was doubtless his (not particularly major) contribution to the record, and his two walk-on parts in the last series of Monty Python's *Flying Circus* that caused the original American promotion of *Hitchhiker's*, five years later, to bill him as a member of the Python team. (For completists, or people who are interested, Douglas played a surgeon in a sketch that never gets started, and later, in a scene where a rag-and-bone man is hawking nuclear missiles from a horse and cart, Douglas was one of the squeaky-voiced little 'pepperpot' ladies, as the Pythons call them.)

It is worth noting at this point that Douglas had not really earned much money. His \$17-a-week rent was being paid from his overdraft. He was not happy. The collaboration with Graham Chapman, far from being the break it had seemed, was a failure that left Douglas convinced that he was a 24-year-old washout. The collaboration's collapse was due to many factors, including Chapman's then troubles with alcoholism, Douglas's increasing lack of money, the uncertainties about the future of Monty Python's *Flying Circus*, and just plain bad luck.

At about the time that Douglas Adams and Chapman finally split up, Douglas was invited to Cambridge to direct the 1976 *Footlights* revue. In the past, the director's job had been to go to Cambridge every weekend for two or three months, take whatever show *Footlights* had roughly worked out so far, pull it



into shape and stage it professionally.

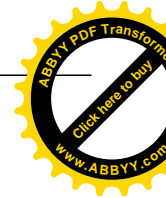
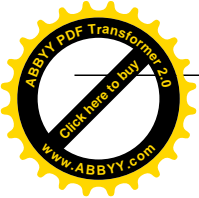
Unfortunately for Douglas, in the two years since he had left Cambridge, the Footlights clubroom, which was the hub of the society, had closed down and been redeveloped into a shopping centre. Footlights had become homeless and dispossessed, and had almost ceased to exist.

"Whereas in my year, 1974, there were tremendous battles and competition to get in, I wound up in 1976 knocking on people's doors, saying, 'Have you heard of Footlights and would you like to be in the May Week Revue?' It was terrible. I got some people - Jimmy Mulville and Rory McGrath from Who Dares Wins, Charles Shaughnessy, who's now a daytime soap heart-throb in America on a show called Days of Our Lives - and the final show had some good bits, but they were few and far between, and the whole experience was pain and agony. I had to conjure something out of nothing. At the end of the show I was completely demoralised and exhausted."

At this point, Douglas went to the Edinburgh Festival, with John Lloyd, David Renwick and others, with a fringe show called The Unpleasantness of Something Close, for which Andrew Marshall was to write some sketches. The show made no money, and Douglas's income for the year was now approaching \$200. His overdraft was nearing \$2000.

With his flatmate, John Lloyd, he worked on a film treatment for the Stigwood Organisation - an SF comedy based on The Guinness Book of Records - which never got off the ground, the attitude being, "Who was John Lloyd, and who was Douglas Adams?" Together they also wrote pilots for a television situation comedy to be called Snow Seven and the White Dwarfs, about two astronomers living in isolation together in a fictitious observatory situated on top of Mt. Everest. ("The idea for that was minimum casting, minimum set, minimum number of sets, and we'd just try to sell the series on cheapness. That failed to come to anything.")

While demoralised and very broke, Douglas answered a classified ad in the Evening Standard and found himself a bodyguard to an oil-rich Arabian family - a job which involved sitting outside hotel rooms for twelve hours a night, wearing a suit, and running away if anybody turned up waving a gun or grenade. (So far as it can be established, nobody ever did.) The



family had an income of \$20,000,000 a day, which cannot have done much for Douglas's morale, although it provided him with numerous anecdotes and another profession for the book jacket biographies.

"I remember one group of family members had gone down to the restaurant in the Dorchester. The waiter had brought the menu and they said, 'We'll have it.' It took a while for the penny to drop that they actually meant the whole lot, the a la carte, which is over a thousand pounds' worth of food. So the waiters brought it, the family tried a little bit of all of it, then went back up to their room. Then they sent out one of their servants to bring back a sackful of hamburgers, which is what their real obsession was. "

All of Douglas's attempts to persuade television producers that a comedy science fiction series might not be a bad idea had come to nothing. His overdraft was enormous. He couldn't pay the rent. He had almost convinced himself that he was not and never would be a writer, and that he needed a "proper job". It was coming on towards Christmas 1976, and a highly depressed Douglas Adams went to his mother's house in Dorset, where he did not have to pay any rent, to live for the next six months, coming into London as necessary.

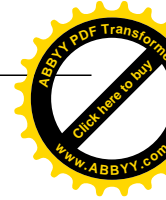
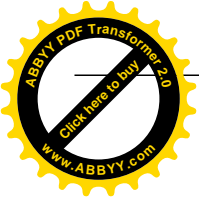
He was a 24-year-old flop.

4

## Gherkin Swallowing, Walking Backwards and All That

JOHN LLOYD IS PROBABLY the most influential producer in British comedy today. His successes include Not the Nine O'Clock News, Black Adder, and Spitting Image. He was also associate producer of the Hitchhiker's television series, and co-wrote Episodes Five and Six of the first radio series with Douglas Adams. He also co-wrote The Meaning of Liff with Douglas Adams, of which more later.

Lloyd was a member of Footlights in 1973. He had intended to become a barrister, but was infected by show business, and on



graduating worked as a freelance writer, and as a producer in BBC Radio Light Entertainment.

He is a phenomenally busy man. I wound up interviewing him for this book at nine o'clock one Monday morning at the Spitting Image studios in London's Limehouse Docks, squeezed into a crowded schedule while people with urgent problems gestured at him from outside the glass partitions of his office.

"I knew Douglas, although not very well, at university. I was at Trinity, Cambridge, while he was at St John's, which is the next college along. Douglas did some of the unfunniest sketches ever seen on the Footlights stage - according to the people in Footlights. He'd do very long sketches. . . there was one about a tree, I remember, and another about a postbox. He'd stand up at these Footlights smokers and harangue the audience with these long, rather wearisome sketches, which didn't go down at all well in Footlights at that time, which was almost all singing and dancing. "

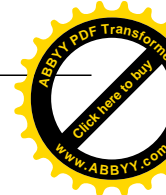
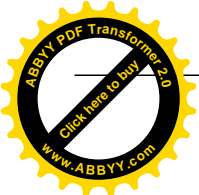
And so he went off with Martin Smith and Will Adams and they did two absolutely brilliant college revues, packed out, at the same time I was doing the Trinity revues. (Footlights at that time was a bunch of nancy boys - they had this awful club where they'd all go and pretend to be Noel Coward; but when that got knocked down to build a car park, Footlights became more peripatetic, and it began to attract a broader spectrum of people.)

"It was thought - especially by Douglas - that the Adams-Smith-Adams's revues were much better than Footlights' - and indeed they were. There was one amazingly funny bit in the interval where they told jokes very slowly to drive people out of the audience into the bar.

"I'd met Douglas a few times at parties, but it was only when I'd left university that I used to go and have lots of hamburgers with Douglas in a hamburger bar called Tootsies in Notting Hill, and we got to know each other extraordinarily well. We eventually wound up sharing a flat.

"I was working as a radio producer and Douglas was doing things like writing with Graham Chapman - an absolutely bizarre experience, as they used to get phenomenally drunk. Graham had a room in his house entirely devoted to gin: it was just gin bottles (he later went on the wagon) that lined the walls, and occasionally when I was working in BBC Radio I'd go up





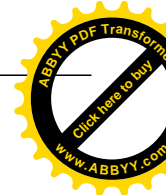
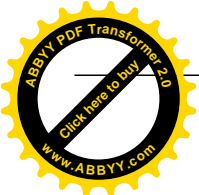
there at lunchtime. They'd have a few gins before lunch, then they'd go to the pub and do all the crosswords in every paper. Then they'd, get roaring drunk, and usually Graham would take his willy out and put it on the bar... it was quite entertaining.

"After work, I'd come back from the office, and usually Douglas had had a very large number of baths and cups of tea and eaten all the food, and we'd sit around and write in the evenings. There were three of us sharing a house: my girlfriend, Douglas, and me. I was fully employed, but Douglas was struggling rather; he was very poor, and getting broker and broker, and his overdraft was going up and up, and he was getting more and more desperate. We had all these projects: Douglas and Graham had written a treatment for a film of the Guinness Book of Records, which fell through, so Douglas and I started doing it. We did rather well - the Stigwood Organisation liked it, and they invited us to come to Bermuda and discuss it, and we were incredibly excited. It was dreadfully disappointing. We never heard anything more from them, and we never even got paid for it.

"It would have been a science fiction thing, about a race of aliens who were the most aggressive aliens in the whole universe, who somehow got hold of a copy of the Guinness Book of Records and who immediately came down to challenge the world at wrestling and boxing and stamping on people's knuckles, that kind of thing. And the United Nations (John Cleese was going to be general secretary of the UN, I remember) agreed to compete, but they wanted to do all the silly events, like gherkin-swallowing, walking backwards and all that. So they had a Guinness Book of Records Olympics, and the aliens won all the sensible events, but lost at all the silly things.

"Then we decided to go and live in Roehampton. We were very happy, until we started advertising for a fourth person to share the house, and we had a succession of weird people. There was one very bizarre person - one day we got back from work to find he'd ripped up every carpet in the house (the house was rented from a little old lady) and he'd thrown them out of the window, as he said they were `smelly'. The last straw came when we came home to find he'd chain-sawed the front hedge down because, he said, it was untidy.

"At that time I was producing Weekending, and I was always trying to get Douglas to produce stuff. At that time, I'd write lots



of quickies for all sorts of comedy shows, while Douglas wouldn't. At the time, I thought he was wrong, I thought you had to be able to do everything which I could, and he couldn't, or wouldn't. I fitted in quite easily, and I got Douglas to write for Weekending. He wrote a very funny sketch about John Stonehouse, the idea being that he was pretending to be dead all the time, but it just wasn't right for the show. It was very funny but wrong.

"Then we went our separate ways. I was a radio producer. He was an unsuccessful writer. Anyway, we remained good friends. But Douglas was at the edge of despair at that time, he was absolutely broke (if he wanted a drink I'd have to buy it for him). He had started applying for jobs in shipping in Hong Kong and so on, as he'd totally given up on being a writer.

"And then Simon Brett came along..."

5

## When You Hitch Upon a Star

"1976 WAS MY WORST YEAR. I'd decided I was hopeless at writing and I'd never earn any money at it. I felt hopeless and helpless and beached. I was overdrawn and in a bad way.

"In Hitchhiker's there's an element of writing myself back up out of that. I was surprised and delighted to find a lot of letters from people in the early days would say, 'I was terribly depressed and upset until I sat down and read your book. It's really shown me the way up again'. I wrote it to do this for myself, and it's seemed to have the same effect on a lot of other people. I can't explain it. Perhaps I've inadvertently written a self-help book."

There are a number of people without whom Hitchhiker's, at least in the form we know it, would never have appeared.

John Lloyd is one; Geoffrey Perkins another. But without doubt, the most important is Simon Brett, who was, in 1976, producer of a Radio 4 comedy programme, The Burkiss Way.



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