



THE COMPLEAT MRS LILIAN BROADBRIDGE

Posted on September 1, 2021 by Mark Stocker



Preamble

I grew up in Radlett, Hertfordshire, about 15 miles from London, in the same cunningly modified semi-detached late 1930s home for the first 19 years of my life, and would periodically return there, sometimes from New Zealand, for a further 19 years.

Our place was right by a bluebell wood and opposite wheat fields. Back then, Radlett was a rather smug, solidly, perhaps even slightly upper, middle-class place. Today it is dominated by footballers, plutocrats and other nouveaux riches. In my day, there were two titled people on my Horticultural Society delivery list (Dad was an avid dahlia grower) – and our quarterly bulletin was the splendidly titled, *Weeder's Digest*.

The heroine of the literary *amuse-bouches* that follow, Mrs. Lilian Broadbridge, long gone to Jesus, lived in a detached house in the street running parallel to us, Newberries Avenue. Fortunately her back garden was one along, but within easy hailing distance – and, by Jove, her voice carried.

Were she alive today, I think she would be tickled pink by the thought of having her views on race relations and the Royal Family as well as her wider Weltanschauung committed to print (these are coming up in the months ahead)!. There's even a thank-you letter from her to Dr Dass to that effect.

Her husband, Leslie, was a shadowy presence, whose later years were absorbed in his stamp collection, watching cricket on TV, and silently working in the garden during her lengthy absences 'down the village', as everyone called it.

Mrs. Broadbridge Talks Politics

Though I always vote what my Leslie votes for, for us it's just like what Henry Ford said about cars. You can have any colour, so long as it's true blue [laughs]. He actually said black, I know a thing or two about history, but you know what I mean. A proud, true blue Tory, that's me, born, bred – and educated.

Mrs. Thatcher wants to protect our great grammar schools, and I can tell you that getting into Watford Grammar was a life-saver for young Les. You won't catch me dead in a ditch voting Labour! Their aim is to make everyone, regardless of their ability and intelligence, everyone equal. That's alright on a desert island maybe, but on our island with 55 million people on it, it's another matter. Equality is the slippery slope to communism, mark my words. And what did we fight the War for, with Winston at the helm, if it wasn't to keep out those nasty Nazis and their pals the Reds?

Labour wants to tax you up to the hilt, down to the final penny. Les and I have precious little to show for after the taxman cometh, even with Mrs. Thatcher, thank heaven she's in no. 10 now. And the price of those fresh vegetables at Draper's (you'd never catch me going to Daryll's on the other side of Watling Street), is really shocking. Melons 50p each! Never did I ever think it would come to this.

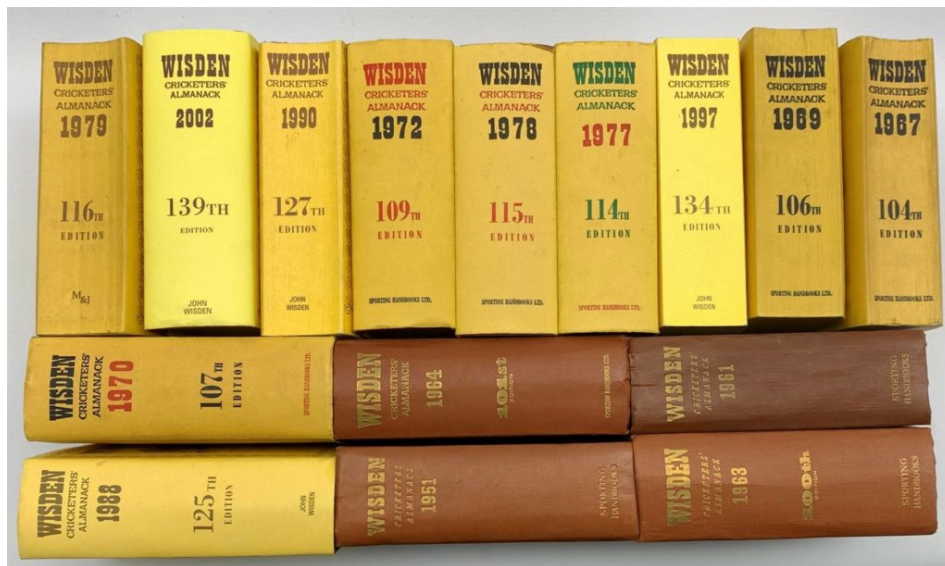
We have to scrimp and save, Les and me. And when we drove through the council estate on our way to Watford the other day, there was a late model Rover, or even worse a Toyota (I'll never forgive them for what they did to our lads in the War).

Where was I? Yes, a gleaming Toyota parked on just about every drive, it made me almost ashamed of our Allegro. I ask you, where does all their money come from? And you should see what they cram into their trolleys in the supermarket, honestly, all those Cola bottles, beer cans by the dozen, huge packets of crisps, it's money no object – alright for some!

Well, talking of shopping, I'd best be going down the village again myself, Les is clean out of his pipe tobacco, he's a very particular man is our Les, but let me tell you this, though I love watching Cilla on Blind Date and some of those young men are really handsome, I'd never, ever hope to find a better or more loving husband...

Mark interjects (no chance earlier): So he's a real man, is he?

Mrs Broadbridge: Oh you are a one! [Dissolves into laughter].



Wisden Cricketers' Almanack, favourite reading of Leslie Broadbridge.

Mrs Broadbridge On Feminism

Those feminists are whiners and whingers. I never needed feminism and just look at me now! As for bra-burning, well that's even more stupid. When Leslie was courting me, he admired my endowments. Wearing a bra is part and parcel of them. Burning it would be like smashing my lovely, privately prescribed, tortoiseshell glasses, cutting off your nose to spite your face.



Germaine Greer, seen confronting Mrs. Lilian Broadbridge.

And let me tell you this. If a woman can't influence her husband in every way, she must be some kind of a ninny. I'm quite progressive, really, and once the children are at school, I quite understand it if a woman wants to go back into the big wide world and find a job - and do very well in it. But that's about as far as my feminism goes and if that cocky Germaine Greer ever comes anywhere near Newberries Avenue, I'll jolly well give her a piece of my mind!

Mrs Broadbridge Says Thank You

[Ooh! I have a soft spot for handsome Indian gents, while Les is a big fan of that cunning slow bowler in the pink turban, the Venerable Bedi he calls him!]

Dear Dr Dass,

Never would I have thought that our clever young Mark, from that semi-detached in Theobald Street, would be featuring an article on the likes of us!! Truth be told, I'm really chuffed. You notice, as a literary man, how

I write it correctly, not "never would I of thought." There lies a story! I wrote that in primary school and got a black star, my only one. My teacher said, and full of sarcasm Miss Venables was, 'You don't want to be one of the great unwashed!'

No I do not, and to this day I'll have you know I enjoy two hot baths a week, complete with my lovely Yardley Lavender salts. Leslie, he does the same, and - I'll let you into a little secret - he sings rather loudly in the bath. Lordy, I heard him bellowing out :We all live in a yellow submarine" last night, and it gave me quite a giggle.

Well, that's more than enough of our private lives for the time being at least, but before I go, just to say many thanks indeed for publishing our boy!!

Sincerely yours and God bless,
Lilian Broadbridge (Mrs.)

The [featured image](#) shows, "Housewives' Choice," by Winifred Hartley, painted in 1956. Image courtesy of Elizabeth Crawford.

