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Long arm of the law hits screen at last

HOW does a 1970s police station differ from the 2012 equivalent? A fly on the wall of the old Swan Hunter shipyard could tell you because they have recreated one there for new film *Harrigan*.

Another who can tell you is writer Arthur McKenzie who drew on his experiences as a copper in Newcastle in the 1960s and 70s to produce an exciting and authentic script.

Arthur says he was instrumental in ensuring the film-makers made the sets as authentic as the storyline with "piles of paper and broken desks".

Elaborating, he says: "I kept referring them to Hill Street Blues.

"You have to think of a working office where it's all happening and there are half-eaten dinners lying around and cans of Coke, not a computer in sight and everybody fighting for the cars because we only had two.

"If you couldn't get a car, you had to use your own vehicle or else jump on a bus or walk.

There were no radios either. They were just bringing those in, but they didn't work properly."

This was policing as Arthur knew it and it is the stamping ground of his fictional creation, Detective Sergeant Barry Harrigan, who represents the long arm of the law on a crime-ridden estate in the North East.

One week into a four-week shoot at locations around the North East - including that scruffy 'nick' at Swan Hunter in Wallsend - Arthur can say without a moment's hesitation: "I'm over the moon". It is a sobering fact - if you happen to be a would-be screenwriter - that most film

Behind a new feature film being shot in the North East lies a successful father-and-daughter team, as **DAVID WHETSTONE** reports

ideas remain just that. Only a very small proportion ever attract the funding to get them into production and only a few of those ever open at your local cinema.

Arthur says: "After 16 years, I never gave up hope and I think, in a way, it's just coming together at the right time. I've got to thank my daughter and Vince Woods who have been the engine behind the whole thing."

Arthur's daughter, Kirsty Bell, is a fundraising expert who set up TallTree Pictures in 2009 with Harrigan director Vince, an old friend.

Harrigan is the first full-length film made entirely by the TallTree team who aim to make two films a year.

It is Kirsty who is credited with raising the \$2m needed to turn Harrigan from idea into going concern, with the North East business community rallying to the cause.

Arthur, the grateful beneficiary, says of Harrigan: "It was originally written for a guy called Geraint Davies. He was a TV producer and he wanted to commission a new police series. He singled me out to write something. So this was going to be a police series set in the 1970s



PRESENCE Writer Arthur McKenzie with Stephen Tompkinson who stars in his film, *Harrigan*

but unfortunately Geraint Davies died, his basket was cleared and new brooms came in.

"Then *Life On Mars* (a BBC police series set in 1973) came along. Good ideas are always in the air."

Arthur, who lives in Gosforth, rose through the police ranks and retired after 31 years as a detective inspector in the West End of Newcastle.

His years in various branches of the police have provided him with a fund of stories.

Some of these, with a bit of embellishment and amalgamation here and there, have found

their way into the screenplay for *Harrigan* - originally called *Harrigan's Nick* - which stars Stephen Tompkinson as Barry Harrigan.

He returns to his local patch after a secondment in Hong Kong to find lawlessness and fear stalking the streets.

"Harrigan sees the place he cares about has gone to rack and ruin and he needs to clean it up," says Stephen Tompkinson, who was handed the script a year ago when he came to Newcastle to play a villain in the play *Faith and Cold Reading* at Live Theatre.

"He believes in a physical presence on the streets and he sets about taking on the bullies."

You can believe that Arthur McKenzie wouldn't have had too much sympathy with bullies. As well as being a highly professional and decorated police officer, and a physically imposing chap, he was also once a top athlete, representing Great Britain.

An article published in our sister paper, the *Evening Chronicle*, in June 1963 begins: "Constable 'Muscleman' McKenzie, of Newcastle City Police, likes to throw his weight about. But he uses it to throw - a discus."

In an extraordinarily varied life, Arthur has also forged a third career as a writer on series such as *The Bill*, *Wycliffe* and *Spender*. He lists his heroes as Wilson the Wonder Athlete who appeared in boys' comic *The Wizard* in the 1940s, bodybuilder Charles Atlas and the playwright Tom Hadaway, the late fishmonger-turned-playwright who advised him when he first turned his hand to writing.

Arthur says he has written his life story - working title: *Wilson of The Wizard* is to *Blame* - but says publishers have been bamboozled by his three-tier career, arguing that it comprises more stories than a conventional book can handle.

Perhaps the film will make them change their minds.

Sculptures cast an eye over sporting prowess

AN art project tied to the Olympic and Paralympic Games will stir memories for those who lent their bodies for one of the early exhibitions at Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art back in 2003.

It may come as little surprise to you to learn that sculptor Louise Giblin studied under Antony Gormley at Brighton Polytechnic.

Gormley is the artist who has turned full body casting into a fine art, as he demonstrated when he created *Domain Field* at the new Gateshead venue in 2003.

Back then he and his team created sculptures mimicking the volunteers who allowed themselves to be stripped, wrapped in clingfilm and then coated in quick-drying plaster as the first part of the artistic process.

In total, 186 people aged two to 85 submitted to the process - and they came not only in different sizes but in a whole range of shapes.

For her project called *The Olympian Series*, Louise Giblin worked with five people who are all in pretty good shape.

They were gymnast Beth Tweddle, hurdlers Kriss Akabusi and Sally Gunnell, runner Kelly Holmes and Paralympian swimmer Darren Leach.

Each agreed to be body cast by Louise, a member of the Royal British Society of Sculptors, who works on the Kent/East Sussex border.

The result is a series of metal torsos, the fronts decorated with an image of the Union flag and the athlete's chosen greatest achievement.

The project, in aid of brain injury charity *Headfirst*, will be launched at the Mall Galleries in London on May 22, two days after the Olympic torch relay begins.

Each of the five limited-edition sculptures can be reproduced up to 12 times in cold cast metal or bronze.

Each of the volunteers is to receive one of their sculptures in cold cast metal, valued at £10,000 each, to keep or sell for charity.

The rest will be sold with a proportion of the proceeds going to *Headfirst*.

Beth Tweddle, who is a strong 2012 Olympic



PLASTERED Louise Giblin with gymnast Beth Tweddle. Above right, the finished product

contender, recalled: "It was an amazing experience with some funny memories. These and photos of the finished piece will be treasured forever."

She said she planned to sell her metal torso to raise more money for the charity.

Kriss Akabusi, who won a silver medal at the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles, said: "Having my chest shaved as smooth as a baby's bottom and being stuck in a cast for an hour or so are a small price to pay to have my body image preserved for time and eternity - so I'm very

excited to see the finished article."

The artist said: "I think we wear achievements and things we value as armour to avoid personal scrutiny - hence my sculptures often appear to be wearing armour."

"I'm impressed by people who commit to goals with determination as this makes them powerful. These Olympians are awe-inspiring both physically and mentally."

Louise Giblin has now embarked on a new series called *Living Legends*.

David Whetstone



BALTIC Artist Antony Gormley and a cast of casts for his *Domain Field* work

Daughter determined to get funds for film

KIRSTY Bell got an early mention in a newspaper article in 1968 when dad Arthur McKenzie was interviewed about his prowess as a discus thrower and his chances of making the team for the Olympics in Mexico City.

"I once ran 100 yards in 10.3 seconds and I might have developed into a useful rugby player," Arthur told our reporter.

"I represented England in a youth international. However, playing around with a discus at school fascinated me."

That fascination took him to the very top, although it didn't, in the end, get him to Mexico.

Closing the interview Arthur spoke gratefully of the support he received from his wife Irene and their young children.

"Some day we will find the time to take the children (five-year-old Andrew and two-year-old Kirsty) on that holiday we keep talking about, but so far haven't managed," he said.

Presumably they did eventually go on that holiday. But now it seems he is in Kirsty's debt yet again.



HIGH HOPES Arthur MacKenzie and Kirsty

She is credited with having raised the money to make Arthur's film, *Harrigan*.

"Raising the funds for the project has been difficult in the current economic climate but I

am thrilled that it has come to fruition," she says. "However much I love the fact that we are doing this for my father, it wouldn't be happening if the numbers were not right and we were not convinced it will be a commercially viable project that will generate healthy returns for our investors."

"However much I would like to see my father's film up on the big screen, if it didn't work commercially then it wouldn't work for me."

"When it comes to investing you have to put your corporate head on and not your personal one."

Kirsty, who has clearly inherited her father's pragmatism, worked as a tax specialist before setting up her own company, *Integral Strategies*.

Of TallTrees, the company she formed with Vince Woods in 2009, she says: "Our simple wish was to create a sustainable business with clarity and transparency for all involved. The contacts and backing we have received to date have demonstrated this commercially."

The boys are back in town for a fine performance

Thin Lizzy at Newcastle City Hall

IT remains to be seen just how many shows the new-look Thin Lizzy will have to play before the perception of this classic rock institution changes.

Yet those who persist in labelling Scott Gorham's latest line-up as a glorified tribute act really do need a reality check.

On the back of more than a century of gigs in 2011 it's difficult to imagine any band playing a tighter, more entertaining and emotive set than the experienced group of musicians currently flying the flag for Phil Lynott's legacy.

Little over 12 months since their last visit to Tyneside the boys were back in

town but this time they meant business.

Showing just one change from 2011's line-up - Damon Johnson replacing Def Leppard's Vivian Campbell on lead guitar - Lizzy delivered all the hits with confidence and composure.

This time last year frontman Ricky Warwick was, unsurprisingly, obsessed with getting every last detail right as he sought to fill the shoes of a lost rock legend. As a result his trademark ease was missing and the performance lacked emotion.

Fast forward to the weekend and Warwick is the epitome of new-look Lizzy, enjoying his moment and engaging with a stellar supporting cast.

On one side stands long-time John

Sykes collaborator and ageless rhythm king Marco Mendoza, never missing a beat standing shoulder to shoulder with dexterous new boy Johnson.

To Warwick's left is Scott Gorham who can still cut it in the company of young buck Johnson. Brian Downey may not be, in Warwick's words, "the greatest drummer in the world" but his masterclass on *Bad Reputation* was awe-inspiring.

And then there's the enigma that is Darren Wharton.

For 95% of a Lizzy live show it's impossible to know what the former Dare man is doing behind the banks of keyboards. Save for a key stint on *Still In Love With You*, Wharton is lost deep in a

mix barely able to accommodate three guitars and a rhythm section, let alone a fluffy tinkler.

It's a role that surely requires revision as Lizzy move forward. Wharton, always smiling and often beguiling, must wonder if it's worth all the effort and his band mates might well question the need for a sixth pseudo-redundant member.

But as a whole there's no doubt Lizzy remain one of the finest live bands on the planet. The encore of *Emerald*, *Rosalie* and *Black Rose* is unrivalled in classic rock and continues to evoke stirring memories of a talent much missed.

Simon Rushworth



There's no doubt Lizzy remain one of the finest live bands on the planet

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