

The English were always Philistines, Sir Roy!

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Sir Roy Strong, the eminent English historian and former director of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, has ridiculed the television programme *Im a celebrity& Get me out of Here!* in a recent article in *The Daily Mail*.

It made we feel utterly ashamed to be British, he lamented. For those of you lucky enough not to know what this programme is about, let me explain. It chooses a number of celebrities and puts them in an artificial situation. In the latest series they were dropped in the Australian jungle and put through a number of ordeals such as having insects poured on their heads! As always there was a mixture of personalities with the emphasis on young people of the opposite sex being together. These could be relied on to use bad language, take off most of their clothes or even have sex.

Sir Roy deplores that the country of Purcell, Shakespeare, Isaac Newton and Winston Churchill had sunk so low. Its not just that so many people watched *Im a Celebrity* (14 million) and the vacuous behaviour of its victims, but that they actually gloated over such puerile antics in their homes.

Although Sir Roy Strong is an eminent historian, it is difficult to understand his surprise at 14 million people gloating over this gibberish. When he refers to the country of Purcell, Shakespeare, Isaac Newton you have to giggle. When did the majority of English show any interest or love of Shakespeare (endured at school by the majority) or the classical music of Purcell or the scientific theories of Newton? Anyone with any acquaintance with English people will know that these are the interests of the few, even the elite.

This is precisely the problem. On the one hand we have an elite who enjoy these cultural pursuits, and on the other the vast majority who are glued to their televisions watching *Im a Celebrity* or soap operas such as *Eastenders*. However, as an historian I am sure Sir Roy is aware of the origin of this problem in the educational system at the end of the Victorian period.

## The English were always Philistines, Sir Roy!

The Victorians did not encourage education among the working masses. They were employed in dreadful conditions in dangerous factories, on low wages on the farms of big landowners and in virtual servitude in domestic service. Added to this there was the constant demand to fill the ranks of the army and navy to maintain the largest empire in the world. In 1870 an Education Act was passed allowing all children between 5 and 10 to go to school. However, as their parents had to pay a small fee, most children did not attend. Only in 1891 when education was made free for children under 10 did the majority go to school. Even then many did not, as their parents were poor and they preferred to send them to work to earn income for the family.

The rich Victorians were happy with an uneducated underclass which they could control politically. The legacy of this educational exclusion of the majority continues to the present day in England. Hence, the appetite for trashy television programmes such as I m a Celebrity. I am afraid Sir Roy, the majority of English were always philistines. The Victorian legacy has proved too powerful to undo.

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### **The Ghost of Expected Surprises**

**By Rick Hoogendoorn**

Here, Cratchet, what do you think you're doing?

Uh, er, leaving sir.

Leaving? It's 5 minutes to the hour. Shall I dock your pay accordingly.

Uh, er, no sir.

No sir? Well it's back to work for you then, and be quick about it. And I don't expect your mind to be off home before your body gets out the door either, what?

Uh, er, no sir.

Quite.

Will you be doing anything for Christmas, sir?

Christmas, Schmissmiss.

Uh, er, what sir?

Schmi, schmish. Smiss.

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Are you okay, sir?

Schmee, smaa, ooh.

Mr. Scrooge, sir? Mr. Scrooge? Mr. Scroo....

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Oooohhh. Ooooooooooooooooooh!

What? Who? What? Oh!

EEEEIIIII am the Ghooooost of Expeeeected Surprises.

What? What? Again? Not again. Oh please, spirit, not again. Please no.

EEEEIIIII visited yooooou laaaast year, Scrooooooooooooooge.

Oh, yes, spirit, that you did. That you did. Ooooooooooh, and here I forgot!

FOOOOORGOOOOOT!!!!

Oh, please spirit. Not so loud. Not again. Not again.

Why am I heere again, Scrooooooooooge? Why again?

Uh, uh, because I forgot the very thing that comes around every year. I forgot, yet again, Spirit. Silly me. Oh, silly silly me. I'm a bad man, spirit. Please have mercy. Oh please.

What is the Deeeefinition of Expeeeected, Scrooooooooooge?

Um, of course, yes, I know this, why it's something known in advance. Yes. Known in advance, spirit. Something you can see coming. It's clear. It's clear now, spirit. Foresight. Advanced knowledge.

And yet you are caught unprepaaaaared again this year, Scrooooooooooge!!

I am, good spirit. I am wholly unprepared. I didn't see you coming either, I fear. Stupid, silly man that I am. Oh spirit. Please. What is to become of me?

Yoooooooouuuuuuu knooooow.

Ooooooh. Not that spirit. Anything but that.

Yeeees. Scroooge. Revise yooooour buuuuudgett.

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My, my budget, spirit? But I have a budget.

Muuuuuusssst yooooou beeee reminded agaaaaain? Yooooou have a mooonthleey budget, Scrooooooge. Buut you have nooooo alloooocation foor annual expeeeennsses.

I forgot, spirit. I forgot.

Eveerrry year yooooou have nooooo money foooooor Christmaaaaas. Noooo money foooooor birthdaaaaay gifts, nooooo money foooooor caaarriage insurance, noooo caaaash for property taaaaxes.

No spirit. Never a penny. Never a pound. Never a schekel I fear. I'm tapped out and credit cards haven't been invented yet!

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHH! Never meeention credit caaards, Scroooooooge!

Sorry, spirit.

The Ghooost of Future Expeeeeected Surprises is beset with credit caaaaard nightmaaaaares! Yooooou don't waaaant a visit from hiiim.

No spirit, no. Not him. I've learned my lesson spirit. I have. I know I have. I will budget for annual

expenses from now on. No longer will Ebenezer Scrooge be surprised by the expected. Caught without cash for things he knew, and always knew, were coming...yet again.

Caaaash foooooor Christmaaaaaas gifts too, Scroooooooge?

Wa, uh, ee, well, uh...

Rick Hoogendoorn has been in the financial services industry in Victoria, BC since 1991. Happy Holidays from Cheri Crause & Associates Inc.

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